

WITHOUT REVOLUTIONARY THEORY THERE CAN BE NO REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

# *The Leninist*

**The place for all genuine communists is in the Communist Party of Great Britain**



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## Editorial Statement

### The Party Crisis and the 'Morning Star' Crunch

The very existence of the *Morning Star* is now in question, membership of the Communist Party continues to plummet. For the Party leadership, these are organisational matters to be overcome by organisational measures; for Leninists the crisis in the Party is fundamentally political. We deal with the crisis and how Leninists should work in the Party.

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### Some Thoughts on the British Road to Socialism

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## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

# The Party Crisis and the 'Morning Star' Crunch

The Party is in crisis and it is crunch year for the *Morning Star*. That's the message from the extended Executive Committee meeting of the Communist Party held in January '83.

According to the editor of the *Morning Star* comrade Tony Chater (or Mr. Chater as his paper insists on calling him), the *Star* is now facing "the most serious crisis ever"; it is "crunch year" and at least 3,000 extra daily sales are vital, "not just for the paper's future but for the future of the Communist Party". And in a move that produced a wave of cynicism among the rank and file, the EC appointed ex-London District Secretary comrade Gerry Cohen as the full-timer to save the *Star* (the fate of the paper has been well and truly sealed).

The imminent demise of the *Morning Star*, the continued plummeting membership, the extinction of *Comment*, are as we said in the *Founding Statement of The Leninist* are important issues but "in themselves...not crucial and certainly not central to the crisis in the Party, for the crisis in organisation and influence of the Party is but a reflection of the ideological crisis that has become chronic in our ranks". (*The Leninist*, No 1.)

This ideological crisis was amply illustrated by the proposals made by the right opportunists at the EC on how to save the *Star* and the Party. Comrade Chater made a number of blockheaded suggestions, including the following tailist nonsense; plans are being laid for "a column, say once a fortnight, which we could call something like 'Opinion' and to invite leading people in various parts of the movement to contribute a piece giving their views on whatever subject they liked". (*Morning Star*, January 11 1983)

Other sterling ideas came from National Organiser comrade Ian McKay. His recipe for success was slightly more specific; it entailed tailing the CND on peace, tailing the TUC on unemployment, and tailing the Labour Party in elections. (*Morning Star*, January, 11th 1983).

Undoubtedly, '83 will be a year of crisis for the Party, and the Congress later this year could well mark the beginning of the end of the domination of the Party machine by the right-opportunists. They have been steadily degenerating, their base among rank and file activists is rapidly becoming non-existent (as can be seen from our reports of the London District Congress and the Hackney Borough Conference). Ideologically, they are utterly barren, finding themselves drawn in the Euros wake; they thus preside over a Party at war with itself, a war in which they stand unequivocally on the right. This was shown by their disgraceful role in the infamous 'Tony Lane Debate', the right opportunists sided with the Euros' attempt to distance the Party from its working class membership in the trade unions. The exception among the ranks of the right opportunists was comrade Mick Costello, who has now resigned his position as National Industrial Organiser because of "personal and domestic circumstances".

Looking at the unfolding crisis in the Party, it is clear that unless a concerted struggle is launched by the left, the Euros could well secure a majority on the EC in the not too distant future. Whether this would entail a definite parting of the ways between the right opportunists and the Euros, time alone will tell. But what we can say is that it would be a monumental mistake for the left to place one iota of faith in the 'pro-partyism' of the right opportunists. They are political has-beens, intellectual geriatrics, and equally liquidationist as the Euros; they would gladly sell the Party's independence for thirty pieces of silver, if only somebody would offer.

Simply given the present alignment of forces in the Party,

liquidation is inevitable. But there is another factor coming into play; that is the developing crisis of capitalism. It is this objective reality that will put into motion vast masses of the working class, who are at present apathetic and outside revolutionary politics. It is these forces we must win to block the drift to liquidationism in the Party, to drive out the opportunists, and to prepare the Party and class for the struggle for power. For although we cannot predict the date when a revolutionary situation will develop, whether it will be in three, four, ten or even twenty years time, we can say with absolute confidence that it is inevitable.

It is of no surprise to find that the London District student membership consisted of only fifteen at the time of the last National Congress, and at present there is only one student branch. Membership of the Young Communist League (YCL) is equally appalling; nationally it stands at about 500, while in London is down to just over 100. Some comrades maintain that these figures reflect the domination of Party student organisation and the YCL by the Euro-communists. This is untrue. The state of student organisation and the YCL is an accurate generalisation of the organisational and ideological crisis in the Party as a whole. For it is rightly considered that youth is the barometer of the class struggle. Because of this, the comrades around *The Leninist* are extremely heartened to find themselves joined by an influx of youth into their ranks. Of particular significance is the emergence of a group of supporters in the YCL. Their article represents the raising of the banner of revolutionary revolt by the healthy forces in the League; they aim to channel the anger, frustration and energy of youth into serious revolutionary politics — something that the community politics espoused by the Euro-communist clique, who at present 'lead' the YCL, can never do.

The publication of *The Leninist* has pricked some centrist leaders into action. It is not that they think *The Leninist* will win the Party, for they have no understanding of the power of revolutionary theory. What concerns them is that we might upset their plans. They fear our exposure of that fraud *Straight Left*; they fear our branding them liquidationists; above all they fear that we might stir up a hornets nest in the Party; through which they will suffer.

Being unwilling to *openly* use *Straight Left* in the inner-Party struggle, some centrist leaders have turned to the weapons they really understand — slander, gossip and rumour — in order to fight *The Leninist*. One particularly vile story being circulated by these troglodytes is that the Leninists are financed by the CIA! Very few will take such nonsense seriously, especially our supporters, who know full well that it is only by their sacrifice of giving £1, £5, £10 or more per week, that our journal is possible. Another piece of 'information' offered about the Leninists is that they are confined to London, and therefore stand no chance of getting anywhere. Well this, and the CIA story says more about the centrists than us, for it offers a glimpse of their political psychology, their utter inability to grasp the power of ideas, especially the power of proletarian scientific socialism. For already, support for *The Leninist* has spread to cities in the Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West and to Wales and Ireland, *The Leninist* finds a ready response from all those seeking serious revolutionary politics. We call upon the centrists to come out in the open, state your views openly so that all can judge. This is something that no communist should fear — on the contrary, it is something every communist should welcome. □

# Some Thoughts on the British Road to Socialism

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James Marshall

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## Preface:

The publication of a new draft of the *British Road to Socialism (BRS)* in 1977, and its subsequent acceptance at the 35th National Congress of the Communist Party in November, represented an important victory for the Euro-communist wing of our party. For although nothing fundamental changed, the *BRS* now contains new concepts dear to the hearts of the Euro s, through which the party has been taken one more fateful step towards becoming a bourgeois workers' party. This was done with the consent of the right-opportunists, who have increasingly allowed the Euro-communists to take the ideological and political initiative, being themselves reduced more and more to the level of simple administrators of the party machine.

The intention of this article is to subject the *British Road* to a detailed examination using the tools of Marxism, to show why communists should place no faith in it whatsoever, and why we must fight to replace it. For unless we do so, the victory of socialism in Britain is put in jeopardy. For as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow, a revolutionary situation will some day develop in 'conservative Britain'. Such a situation develops independently of the will of human beings, it is an objective fact, it is something that can either be resolved positively in the form of proletarian revolution, or failing that, negatively in the form of counter-revolution. The key to which direction we take lies in the subjective outlook of the working class, and this in turn is determined, to a great extent, by the vanguard party itself; whether it is steered in struggle, whether it has developed deep roots among the masses and above all, whether it is solidly based on the most scientific theory, which guides its actions. This is why a programme is important, for it represents the crystallisation of the party's general principles and overall strategic approach to revolution. If it is faulty, success is put in doubt, but if the vanguard party has a programme which is based on revisionism then failure is almost inevitable. It is to avoid this fate that we make our criticisms of the *BRS*, in the hope of initiating a debate in the party which will lead to the construction of a genuine communist programme. An article such as ours is not intended to be that programme, far from it, but we do outline some important

principles which we consider to be vital components.

## Introduction

The introduction to the *British Road* (all references unless otherwise stated are from the 1978 edition) states that it is "based on the theory of scientific socialism first elaborated by Marx and Engels, creatively applying that theory to the situation in Britain and the world" (p.3). We consider this claim to be false. The *BRS* has nothing in common with scientific socialism. Its proposals for a "new type of Labour Government", which would solve the capitalist crisis and would even open "up the road to socialism" by "transforming" the state (p4) are not the legitimate offspring of Marx but of Bernstein and Kautsky, the true ancestors of such ideas in the workers movement.

We shall now go through the *BRS*, step by step, to prove our contention.

## 1. Why Britain needs Socialism

### *Consensus politics — Defending Parliament*

This section begins with a rather vapid potted outline of the crisis of capitalism through which the underlying liberalism and undisciplined thinking are clearly visible.

We are told that since "the end of the Second World War there have been Tory governments for about half the time, and Labour governments for the other half". Nothing amiss here, but then the following nonsense: "They have *differed* in many of their policies, but neither have solved the basic problems." (our emphasis p.5). One would have thought that it was universally accepted that throughout the long boom of the 50s and 60s and even during the downturn in the 70s, the policies of the Labour and Tory parties have been the *same* in essence. It was because of this that terms such as 'consensus politics' and *Butskellism* were coined.

But we have not seen anything yet. For after stating that: "The ruling class tries to confine democracy to the right to vote in elections, and deny the people real participation in decision making", we find the claim that "Parliament's rights are being eroded" (p.6).

Therefore it is suggested that Parliament is something we should cherish and defend. For its rights are under attack by "reactionary forces", by the new bogey (replacing the USA in previous editions) the Common Market. The EEC is eroding

"the right in principle for the British people to determine their own affairs." (p.6). The implication is crystal clear, Parliament is a democratic institution which *can* reflect the 'will of the British people'.

## 1.1. Contradictions of capitalism

*Nationalised industries — Underconsumptionism — Transnational companies Imperialism and deindustrialisation*

While correctly locating the source of "Britain's problems" in the contradictions of capitalism, a dangerous idea (opposed elsewhere in the *BRS*) is introduced. It is maintained that the nationalised sector of the economy has an inherent affinity to socialism. For we read: "There is a constant pressure to subordinate the public sector and make it serve the interests of the private sector" (p.6). Of course, nationalised industries under capitalism are the easiest to transform into socialist property after a revolution, they do in a sense represent the seeds of the future inside capitalism. But again, the implication in the *BRS* is obvious, nationalisation equals socialism. The self evident truth is that nationalised industries under capitalism are designed to serve the interests of the capitalist system, how could it be otherwise?

Another fallacy contained in the *British Road* is that of underconsumption, the idea that the cause of the capitalist crisis is a low level of consumption. The *BRS* tells us in all innocence that: "to get the profit, the goods produced have to be sold. And since a major factor in the demand for goods is the level of wages and salaries, restricting them also restricts the market in each capitalist country." (p.7).

This theory ignores the critical role of the rate of profit, which determines capitalist accumulation. It is an unscientific, superficial idea which is used by pious reformists to propose the silly (though seemingly radical) solution to the capitalist crisis of raising workers' wages; by increasing demand, production is thereby increased, which in turn brings new profit to the capitalists. If this cloud-cuckoo-land scheme were possible, one can only wonder why it has never been employed successfully and why later we are told that: "In general, the more they (the capitalists — JM) can cut costs and limit increases in wages and salaries, the more profit they can make." (p.7)

Ideas such as underconsumptionism foster illusions within the working class. They conjure up a picture of capitalist governments, Tory or Labour, carrying out policies which are somehow irrational, illogical, even 'mad'. Pointing to this sad sight our opportunists sigh and with deeply felt sincerity lecture the powers that be on the need for sanity. The fact is of course, that the policies of the capitalists are fully in line with the logic of capitalist accumulation.

Further confusion is created by the *BRS*'s characterisation of the "multinationals"; we are informed that they invest and operate "all over the world" and that they owe "allegiance to no-one but

themselves", in other words they are unpatriotic. It is their "policies" which "have led to a continuous export of capital, with under-investment in British industry and its consequent backwardness as compared to other advanced capitalist countries." (p.7).

For us the very term, "multinational" is misleading. There are very few genuine multinational companies. The vast majority of major monopolies are *transnational* companies, operating internationally — yes, but operating from a specific base, from a specific country. Thus Fords, General Motors, IBM, Chase Manhattan, Standard Oil and Boeing operate internationally, but from their base in the USA. In the same way "our own" monopolies like British Leyland, ICI, British Petroleum, Barclays Bank and British Aerospace have their tentacles spread around the globe, but they remain centred on Britain.

As to the export of capital and its consequent effects on the structure of the metropolitan economy, this was fully analysed by Lenin in his classic work *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

Imperialism, he said, was decaying parasitic capitalism because: "More and more prominently there emerges, as one of the tendencies of imperialism, the creation of the 'rentier state', the usurer state, in which the bourgeoisie to an ever increasing degree lives on the proceeds of capital exports and by the 'clipping of coupons' ... capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before; but this growth is not only becoming more and more uneven in general, its unevenness also manifests itself, in particular, in the decay of the countries which are richest in capital (Britain)." (V.I. Lenin, CW, Vol.22, p.300)

For Leninists, the decay of Britain's home based industries has nothing to do with lack of patriotism by the transnationals, no — it is simply the effect of the iron laws of developed (moribund) capitalism, something which can only be overcome by ending capitalism itself.

As to 'our' transnationals having no allegiances except to "themselves" let us be quite clear as to what is being inferred, i.e. that they have no loyalty to Britain. This is dangerous nonsense, the British state is in truth theirs, they dominate it, it represent *their* collective interests against both the working class and the interests of other, foreign capitalists. And the *BRS* itself declares that: "Monopoly capitalism has become state monopoly capitalism, with the state and the monopolies closely inter-connected". If this contention is broadly correct, and if the monopolies have "grown in size and increasingly dominate Britain." (p.7), then portrayals of the transnationals as cosmopolitan, divorced from nation and therefore state, must be erroneous.

## I.2. How capitalist rule is maintained

*Rule by consent and coercion — democracy — violence*

This subsection of the *BRS* is crucial to the entire document, because the ideas it contains underpin



the strategy of reforming British capitalism into socialism.

It begins by correctly observing that: "The concentration of wealth and economic control in fewer and fewer hands means that a small number of big firms exercise enormous power. Their decisions have a major influence on Britain's economy, on the extent of investment, the amount and type of goods produced, the prices charged, the balance of payments, and the position of the pound. Yet those who own and run them are not elected by, or responsible to, the people. It is a system which makes a mockery of democracy." (p.8).

In other words, under capitalism there is, and can only be, the appearance of democracy, that is formal democracy which is for the mass of the population a sham.

But the *British Road* then comes out in its true pink colours; it says that the ruling class exercises "a degree of coercion to maintain its rule" using institutions like "the civil service, the police, the armed forces, the judiciary, the Foreign Office etc." but capitalist rule "relies primarily on the fact that millions of people believe that the present political system is truly democratic." (our emphasis p.9).

That millions believe in the sham of bourgeois democracy we do not deny, but to suggest that bourgeois rule rests *primarily* on this fact is utter nonsense. For underneath the surface of parliamentary and judicial niceties hides the mailed first of counter-revolutionary terror.

Writing against Karl Kautsky, Lenin declared:

*"The more highly developed a democracy is, the more imminent are pogroms or civil war in connection with every profound political divergence which is dangerous to the bourgeoisie. The learned Mr Kautsky could have studied this 'law' of bourgeois democracy in connection with the Dreyfus case in republican France, with the lynching of negroes and internationalists in the democratic republic of America, with the case of Ireland and Ulster in democratic Britain, with the baiting of the Bolsheviks and the staging of pogroms against them in April 1917 in the democratic republic of Russia..."*

*"Take the bourgeois parliament. Can it be that the learned Kautsky has never heard that the more highly democracy is developed, the more the bourgeois parliaments are subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers? This does not mean that we must not make use of bourgeois parliaments (the Bolsheviks made better use of it than probably any other party in the world, for in 1912-14 we won the entire workers' curia in the Fourth Duma). But it does mean that only a liberal can forget the historical limitations and conventional nature of the bourgeois parliamentary system as Kautsky does. Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradictions between formal equality proclaimed by the 'democracy' of the capitalists and the thousands of real limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into wage-slaves. It is precisely this contradiction that is opening the eyes of the people to the rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism. It is this contradiction that the agitators and propagandists of socialism are constantly exposing to the people, in order to prepare them for revolution! And now that the era of revolution has begun, Kautsky turns his back upon it and begins to extol the charms of moribund bourgeois democracy." (V.I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, CW Vol.28, pp.245-6, original emphasis)*

We make no excuse for quoting Lenin at length. In our view what he says about bourgeois democracy is as true today as it was when he wrote those words in 1918. The Leninist view of bourgeois democracy is that it is, and can only be, formal democracy. Underneath the veneer of

democracy lies its true nature, pogrom and terror. This being *especially* true of the *most* democratic bourgeois regimes. Our task is not to defend bourgeois democracy and its parliament, but to expose the fact that bourgeois rule is based ultimately on terror and force; we do this in order to prepare the masses for revolution.

To see the true nature of bourgeois democracy in contemporary Britain we only need cast our minds back to the Summer of 1981 when police terror was launched against the youth of London's Brixton, Liverpool's Toxteth and of a score of other towns and cities. The nationalist population of the six counties of Northern Ireland also know full well about the role of 'consent', they know first hand the iron fist of coercion through which Britain rules. The massive arms build-up, the Trident missiles, the imperialist Falklands War, the use of troops in strikes, the increased arming of the police with guns and special riot gear, all go to show the true nature of capitalist rule.

For although the *BRS* admits that the capitalists are "prepared to use coercion and violence", it places all its hopes in "preventing" this by the use of the "overwhelming working class and popular strength" (p.10). What exactly is meant by this word *prevention* we will see later on, but let us again emphasise that for the *BRS* the capitalists rule "mainly" through "achieving a social consensus and class collaboration" (p.10), because it is with this absurd idea that the *BRS* can propose to change Britain by winning a mathematical majority. We of course do see the need to win the mass of the population, but for us they must be won to take an active role in the revolutionary overthrow of the state.

### I.3. World balance changed

*Who dominates the world economy? — The peaceful road*

Here we find the idea that there has been "a *decisive* tilt in the balance of world forces... in the direction of socialism and progress... It is the main feature of the world today." (our emphasis p.12). It is this idea, combined with the reformist concept of the state, which is used to justify a peaceful road to socialism through parliament, peacefully, without outside military intervention.

We would be the last to deny the stupendous progress of the socialist countries, both in the economic and military fields; and the importance of a socialist community of states. But these achievements do not equate with a "decisive" shift in the world balance of forces from imperialism/capitalism to the socialist countries. Capitalism remains the determining force in the world economy, its metabolism drives the 'vagaries' of the international market, it accounts for an overwhelming proportion of the world's Gross National Product, in fact, 80%. That the Soviet Union can and does compete with the mighty USA militarily, is both a tribute to the ability of socialism to harness its resources, and to the self-sacrifice of the Soviet people.

Our view on the question of the balance of world forces is dealt with extensively elsewhere in this

edition, in the article by comrade Frank Grafton. So we will confine ourselves here, to the following observations:

Firstly, for socialism to become the decisive, determining force in the world requires new revolutions taking place, especially in the advanced capitalist countries.

Secondly, even when this happens, socialism will not come through bourgeois parliament. The revolution will need to be armed, prepared to do violence. The chances of successful counter-revolution are reduced, and the ability of external reactionary intervention is lessened, given the power of the socialist states. But the use of violence, its intensity, is determined by the extent of opposition offered by the capitalists. A peaceful road to socialism is possible in the future, but this would be due to the potential of the working class to inflict massive, irresistible and overwhelming punishment in the event of capitalist resistance; unfortunately this is not the case today.

#### I.4. Britain's crisis

*Imperialism, a policy or the last stage of capitalism?*

This subsection of the *British Road* repeats much of what has already been covered. It does touch upon the matter of Ireland, but this is something we will deal with specifically, later on. One point we do wish to examine is the concept of imperialism.

We are informed that following World War II there was a "need for a complete break with past imperialist policies". But instead of this, "successful governments, whether Tory or Labour have continued with such policies. (our emphasis p.13). This implies (the standard technique of opportunism) that a Labour government, or even a Tory one for that matter, could if it wished break with imperialism. This would be possible if imperialism were nothing more than a policy, in that case imperialism could be discarded like a pair of smelly old socks. But for us, for Leninism, imperialism represents the domination of production by finance capital and is a *definite* stage in the development of capitalism, its last. It is therefore not simply a *policy* to be picked up or put down by this or that government. To break imperialism is to break capitalism itself, there can be no going back to some pre-imperialist capitalism. The door to the past is permanently closed, the future is a matter of extinction or a qualitative leap to socialism through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

#### I.5. Strategy for socialism

Drawing together the various strands already developed, this subsection outlines what is claimed to be a "strategy for socialism". But instead of a realistic course which aims at smashing the capitalist state machine, what is presented is a confused and utopian pipe-dream.

Although it is correctly stated that: "Only socialism can overcome the basic contradictions from which every aspect of the crisis flows" (p.15),

what is proposed is that a government, before the destruction of capitalism, would "begin to tackle the grave economic, social and political problems of Britain in the interests of the working people." (p.15). This must lead us to ask the question — if a government operating within the confines of capitalism can overcome the contradictions of that system, why do we need to bother about socialism let alone revolution?

## 2. The forces for change in Britain

Section Two of the *BRS* is devoted to the various classes, strata and movements in Britain today and their relationship towards what is called *social progress*. The 'progressive' forces would, according to the *BRS*, be united in something called the "broad democratic alliance", the Euro-communist replacement for the "anti-monopoly alliance" of previous editions.

### 2.1. Classes in society

#### 2.1.1. The working class

The *BRS* rightly considers the working class to "embrace also non-manual workers in industry and distribution such as technicians, clerical and sales workers" as well as "workers in the health service, the civil service and local government." Their interests 'broadly coincide with those of the workers in manual occupations, and indeed the distinctions between manual and non-manual work is more and more being broken down by modern processes of production.'

This said, we would differ on one important point relating to black workers. It is erroneously maintained that they are less unionised than other workers.

"Winning black workers, who often find themselves in unorganised factories, for active participation in the trade union movement, and giving them its full support is vital." (p.19).

In actual fact black workers are more highly organised than the average. On occasions they might find themselves "in small unorganised factories" but more likely they would work in industries with large concentrations of workers, such as health, transport and car manufacture.

#### 2.1.2. The capitalist class

We agree that:

"The capitalist class comprises the owners and controllers of the means of production, distribution and exchange — the factories, banks, shops, land etc. — and their agents. People in higher management positions and in the higher echelons of the civil service and the state apparatus, although they sell their labour power, are part of the ruling class because they act directly or indirectly on behalf of the capitalists, identify with them, and often own substantial amounts of company shares". (p.20)

Also that:

"Within it there is a minority exercising the dominant power — those who control the very big firms, which not only exploit the workers, but also operate at the expense of many smaller businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers." (p.20)

But then it is claimed:

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"There is... an objective basis for an alliance between the working class and many in those sections of the capitalist class (the small capitalist — JM) against the common enemy — the big British and international capitalists." (p.20)

Certainly, a reformist alliance is possible, but this can involve any section of the capitalist class, for such an alliance would be within the confines of bourgeois politics. But in today's Britain a revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, even a small section of it, is an utter impossibility. Monopoly capital does operate at the expense of small capitals but the small capitalists are tied to the coat-tails of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Ideologically they constitute the most narrow-minded, reactionary, rabid and violently anti-working class exponents of 'old-fashioned' capitalism — 'free enterprise' etc. And in times of acute crisis these forces which the *BRS* wants to win, flock into the ranks of mass fascist movements, seeing the revolutionary working class as by far their greatest enemy.

### 2.1.3. Intermediate strata

The middle strata and petty-bourgeoisie consist of: "middle-grade management and the middle ranks of the state apparatus ... Members of family businesses, small shopkeepers and small farmers who employ little or no labour ... professional sections like lawyers, doctors, writers and artists who are self-employed". (p.21)

The *BRS* envisages this stratum as playing an important part in the advance towards socialism. Yes, individuals from their ranks have in the past played outstanding roles in the workers revolutionary movement, but can we realistically look towards the intermediate strata siding with proletarian revolution?

It is true the Bolsheviks did conclude a revolutionary alliance with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, who led the petty-bourgeois masses of Russia — the peasantry. However the fact is that, in Britain, the intermediate strata is a small, declining section of the population due to the development of capitalist production and the process of proletarianisation. In Russia the peasants made up around eighty percent of the population, in Britain today the intermediate strata would be no more than twenty percent. Furthermore, these strata have no independent class party of their own, politically and economically they find themselves dependent on the imperialist bourgeoisie, acting as its servants, while at the same time many find themselves falling into the ranks of the working class.

## 2.2. The Labour Movement

### *The Labour Bureaucracy — left and right reformism*

The "labour movement" is used throughout the *BRS* although "it does not yet comprise the whole of the working class. It includes the trade unions, the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the co-operative movement, and such organisations as the shop stewards committees and Trades Councils." (p.21)

We consider that the term *working class*

*movement* should be resurrected as it by definition includes the entire class, and avoids confusion which can arise about substituting the interests of the working class as a whole for that of the labour bureaucracy.

Reformism is the "dominant outlook" in the "Labour movement". The *British Road* provides us with the following description of this outlook.

"Its main features include class collaboration rather than class struggle, the view that the state is neutral and can serve the purposes of a Labour government as well as Tory or Liberal governments; and the belief that the industrial power of the workers should not be used for political, but only for economic ends." (p.22)

Firstly, let us clear up one point. The state has *in practice* served the interests and purposes of governments — Liberal, Tory and yes, Labour; this is not a naive "reformist" illusion, but a cold statement of fact. The *BRS* implies that Labour governments are in some way different, and that their good intentions are foiled by the nasty capitalist state.

More damning is the definition of reformism, for by limiting it to class collaboration, a belief in the neutrality of the state, and a refusal to use working class industrial strength for political purposes, the little matter of revolution is slipped under the carpet. For reformism in the workers' movement *is above all the denial of the necessity of the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state*. Subsequently it is maintained that: "The reformist strategy is based entirely on the ballot box". (p.35). It is because the *BRS* has completely embraced reformism, that it employs such definitions, for it wishes to hide its reformist shame by retaining some pretensions of being revolutionary, which it can only do by re-defining reformism.

With its definition of reformism, the *BRS* can claim to be Marxist, in the same way sections of the Labour left can be metamorphosed into 'genuine socialists' nay 'revolutionaries'. Peter Hain, for example, calls for the Labour Party to "adopt a much more activist, campaigning strategy. We cannot achieve socialism through parliamentary channels alone." (*Morning Star*, April 27 1981).

What are we to make of Hain's call, does this not put him in line with the *British Road*? The fact is it does, but neither the *BRS* nor he, have anything to do with revolutionary politics, the same goes for all other left-reformists in the Labour Party. For as the old saying goes — you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and no matter how the *BRS* twist and turns, bends definitions of reformism and uses the word revolution, reformism remains reformism.;

On the question of the Labour bureaucracy (the term though is never used) and its general commitment to the continuation of capitalism, its reformism, its treachery etc, the *BRS* explains it in the following way:

"Over many years, leaders of the working class movement have been drawn into the practice of class collaboration, as part of the capitalist power structure, and have enjoyed some of its rewards, including company directorships. This has made reformism particularly strong at the higher levels of the movement." (p.22)

Of course direct bribery plays a part in



sustaining the labour bureaucracy. But company directorships, peerages, knighthoods, OBEs seats on 'quangos' and commissions of enquiry, coupled with lavish wining and dining are also a direct result of the social position of the labour bureaucracy as an intermediary between labour and capital. It is this which is the basis of a labour bureaucracy. And its importance should not be underestimated, for today in Britain the trade union movement consists of around ten million members; at the top of this movement there has emerged a stratum consisting of many thousands who enjoy a life-style similar to management, divorced from the rank-and-file, ideologically committed to 'the prosperity of Britain' and pursuing interests which run counter to those of the working class as a whole. This stratum has to all intents and purposes stepped into the privileged shoes of the labour aristocracy of the nineteenth century.

A central idea perpetrated as a 'theory' is the notion that what lies at the heart of the 'labour movement' is the:

"... battleground between a right-wing trend, composed of the most consistent exponents of reformist policies, and a left-wing trend, which has often challenged the practical policies resulting from reformism. The issues on which this right-left conflict has been fought out have constantly changed, and the political positions of individuals have shifted, but the clash has been constant and will continue." (p.23)

With this sleight of hand the genuine contradiction in the working class movement is conveniently obscured; that of revolution or reform.

There is of course a difference between left and right reformism, but they play complementary roles. The reformist left and right are two sides of the same coin. When in office the reformists carry out bourgeois policies and of course, when in opposition, 'realistic' alternatives must be advanced. On the other hand, their working class base and support must be maintained; it is onto the shoulders of the left that this task falls. Thus the left-reformists 'insist' on 'genuine socialist policies' while calling for the masses to maintain their loyalty to the 'movement'. At the same time, in order to achieve a coherent ideology, the left develops ideas of transforming capitalism through the medium of the capitalist state, which in general bear a remarkable similarity to those contained in the *BRS*. While the left propound their utopian dreams, it is the right which must present a 'realistic' face to the capitalist class, in order to prove their responsibility and fitness to govern; they must keep the left in line — prevent them from 'going too far'. It is for these reasons that the left-right conflict is never-ending, and why the left is always doomed to prattle on about the *next* Labour government. Thus the left-reformist hack Eric Heffer says:

"... the next Labour government must be bold and audacious. It will have to carry through without hesitation its policy based on the party programme. It must not settle once again for propping up the capitalist system, but from the start build on what Labour has already achieved during past governments and carry out fundamental changes so that stage-by-stage the capitalist system is eliminated." (*The Guardian*, April 7 1980)

Heffer, like other left-reformist leaders such as Benn, Race, Foot, Kinnock and Skinner, are

thrown from left to right by the contradictory demands of governing a capitalist state and by the need to maintain the loyalty of the working class. The central question is not between right and left reformism but between revolution and reform, of whatever variety.

## 2.3. The Trade Unions

The false ideas advanced about the left-reformists can be seen in the following passage: "To win workers to a socialist, and not only a militant, class outlook, increased political activity by the Communist Party and the Labour left in the workplaces is essential." (p.24).

In this way the Labour left is given a socialist role. What is really needed is to win workers to a *revolutionary* outlook, in achieving this the Labour left can play no positive role.

## 2.4. The co-operative movement

As with the section on trade unions, no *revolutionary* tasks are posed for communists in the co-operative movement. The *BRS* limits itself to vague calls for increased sales and liaison with the trade unions.

## 2.5. The Labour Party

The Labour Party is, we are told, "... the mass party of the working class." Not only that, but "... changing the politics of the Labour Party is bound up with changing the politics of the working class." and sliding into opportunism by confusing the issue, the *BRS* states that "The Communist Party does not seek to replace the Labour Party as the *federal* party of the working class." (our emphasis p.28)

We consider the Labour Party to be a bourgeois workers party. For although it is based on the working class (on its trade union affiliates in particular) its leaders, its programme, are thoroughly reactionary. Our position is drawn from the entire history of the Labour Party, its betrayals, its record in government, its leaders from MacDonald to Foot. In adhering to this view, we fully coincide with Lenin. In his polemic with Willie Gallacher, Silvia Pankhurst and other British revolutionaries over the Labour Party (note that international polemic was then considered healthy and normal, even the duty of communists) he declared:

"The old International used the method of referring such questions for decision to the individual parties in the countries concerned. This was a grave error. We may not be fully familiar with the conditions in one country or another, but in this case we are dealing with the principles underlying a Communist Party's tactics. That is very important and, in the name of the Third International, we must clearly state the communist point of view.

First of all, I should like to mention a slight inaccuracy on the part of Comrade MacLean, which cannot be agreed to. He called the Labour Party the political organisation of the trade union movement and later repeated the statement when he said that the Labour Party is "the political expression of the workers organised in trade unions". I have met the same view several times in the paper of the British Socialist Party. It is erroneous, and is partly the cause of the opposition, fully justified in some measure, coming from British revolutionary workers. (i.e. opposition to parliamentary activity — JM) Indeed, the concepts 'political department of the trade unions' or 'political expression' of the trade union movement, are

erroneous. Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are workingmen. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is lead by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheide-manns." (V.I. Lenin, *Speech on affiliation to the British Labour Party*, August 6 1920, *CW*, Vol.31, pp.257-8)

The Labour Party can change; this could happen in a pre-revolutionary situation for example, when the masses are moving towards a revolutionary position. But this would be a by-product of revolutionary politics, certainly not the main aim. What is vital for a successful revolution is the winning of the masses. To achieve this the reformist hold over them must be broken. This question is ignored by the *BRS*, which concentrates on promoting the Labour Party instead. As a result there is no mention of the tactic of the united workers front through which revolutionaries unite with the mass of workers in defence of their immediate interests and in the process expose the reformist mis-leaders. It is reformism not alliances we reject, the united workers front is a legitimate *tactic*; likewise we would also consider alliances with other parties if this were a revolutionary alliance aiming to overthrow the existing state.

## 2.6. The Communist Party

### *Proletarian Internationalism — Electoral tactics*

This subsection begins by asking:

"What are the essential characteristics of a party capable of giving the leadership needed in the struggle to transform the labour movement, strengthen working class unity, build alliances with other democratic movements in society, and achieve socialism?" (p.25)

Five such characteristics are laid down:

1. "... it must be based on Marxism-Leninism", How true! If only it was!

2. "... it must be organised for socialist revolution." and "It must be firmly rooted in the working class." Yes!

3. & 4. state that it must be organised on the basis of both democracy and centralism. Again, how could we disagree?

5. It needs to have "international solidarity" with the world communist movement. Surely it should be proletarian internationalism on which relations between communists are based. International solidarity is something to be extended to national liberation movements and is not the same as proletarian internationalism which is the idea that 'the workers have no country', they struggle on a particular national terrain but because of the development of capitalist production relations their struggles are ultimately indivisible.

The substitution of the words international solidarity for proletarian internationalism as the basis for relations between communists is

unquestionably a step to the right. But what of the other four characteristics? For us they are vital principles on which to base a communist party, but in the *BRS* they represent vestiges from the past, not living principles.

Naturally the *BRS* places great emphasis on elections, and that includes the electoral strategy of the Communist Party which:

"... needs to increase its electoral activity, giving the maximum possible number of people the opportunity to vote Communist, and winning representation in Parliament as well as more local Council seats." (p.27)

Surely this contradicts the *BRS*'s desire for Labour Party electoral victories? And the word "maximum" shows all too clearly that the *BRS* has elevated what should be a matter of tactics to the level of principle.

We would advocate *at the moment* the standing of only a few candidates in parliamentary elections, not the maximum number. These should be in constituencies where, despite the rhetoric from the SDP about there being no safe Labour seats, there would be little chance of letting the SDP/Liberals or the Tories win by our action. Such an approach should in no way be separated from the overall ideological struggle in the party. Only on a basis of a solid commitment to Marxism-Leninism could we construct the secure foundation from which to build a united workers' front, using this tactic to win the mass of the working class. On that basis the united front tactic of launching a concerted drive for affiliation to the Labour Party could be considered. Until then, we consider that candidates should only stand on a propaganda basis. (For a full treatment of this question see; Should we stand in elections? — James Marshall, *The Leninist*, No.3)

## 2.7. Social forces and movements

The social forces and movements consist of: women, homosexuals, blacks, nationalists in Scotland and Wales, tenants and residents associations, environmental groups, community newspapers, theatre and other cultural groups, broad committees against social service cuts, teachers, civil servants, scientists, technicians, journalists, local government and social workers, peace organisations, youth, students, the old and last but not least, many religious people. (pp.29-30)

These "forces" are projected as autonomous components of the "broad democratic alliance". Their inclusion in the *BRS* represents the unmistakable 'contribution' of the Euro-communists. For them community politics, protest groups, 'autonomous' movements, and the general petty-bourgeois milieu are the stuff of politics.

For us, *all* workers should be organised by the party. We recognise the importance of democratic demands and therefore party commissions on specific questions or organising particular groups. But our aim is, for example, to split working class women from their bourgeois 'sisters', the same would apply to all cross-class alliances whether between blacks, homosexuals or Scotsmen. 'Autonomous' movements can only in the end be auto

nomous from the working class and dependent on the bourgeoisie. It is for this reason that communists seek to split these 'autonomous' movements, detaching working class sections, winning them to the conviction that their true interests can only be served by recognising themselves as workers.

## 2.8. Alliance not isolation

### *Revolutionary alliances — Democratic demands*

"The Labour movement needs alliances with... other democratic movements because, in supporting their aims and aspirations, it becomes increasingly aware that class oppression, and the struggle against it, extend far beyond the workplace, and embrace strata beyond the working class. Such alliances are needed to bring the political weight of the overwhelming majority of the population to bear on the minority ruling class. They can lead to a greater awareness of the forces that oppress all workers, and also strengthen working class unity. It is therefore through such support and association that the labour movement becomes more conscious of its own national role as the leading force in society, and better able to fulfil that role, both now and under socialism." (p.33)

Yes, the *working class*, organised by its vanguard party — the Communist Party, must support the struggles of all those oppressed by capital, must win all workers to the recognition of their class interests. But this has nothing to do with "alliances" in a strategic sense. Yes, tactical alliances can be formed and broken, but the aim of such tactics would be to gain unquestioned hegemony of the Communist Party over the working class.

In Britain today, with the working class constituting at least 75% of the population, we have no great need for class alliances, for the only significant classes are the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Individuals from the intermediate strata can be won to the banner of the revolution, but the mass of them are tied by a thousand strings to the bourgeoisie and their state. Talk of a class alliance with these forces is as we have indicated above sheer self-deception. Only when we have won state power would it become possible to win the mass of these people to our side, to transform them from being servants of the bourgeoisie to the servants of the proletariat and eventually to unite them with the workers as socialism develops and approaches the threshold of communism.

One point worth mentioning here is the right-opportunists' and Euro-communists' obsession with that word 'democratic', it seems to crop up everywhere. In the *BRS* it is used as a code word for goodness and light. Classically the adjective was used to indicate a demand which was not specifically socialist, which could cross classes, thus denoting the *limited* level of the struggle, so the demand for equality by women, blacks or homosexuals is a democratic one, as is that for peace. The *BRS* fails to use the word in this way, no distinction is drawn between democracy and socialism, no task posed for channelling the democratic demands of the masses into demands for socialist revolution.

## 2.9. Winning a new popular majority

This subsection illustrates the prostration of the

*BRS* to the Labour Party, for the "...winning of a new political majority" referred to, is a majority for the Labour Party. This is what the building of alliances has all been about.

The Labour Party is criticised for creating disillusionment amongst the masses, for falling back from the 49% of the vote they obtained in 1951. To reverse this the *BRS* offers a "new strategy" in order to achieve "a decisive advance in the Labour vote" (p.34)

This so-called "new strategy" would reject the "traditional right-wing approach of adopting capitalist policies to win the so-called middle ground in politics"; this "has been constantly tried, and has constantly failed to win the majority of the electorate to Labour's side." (p.35)

It is even claimed that: "this alternative that we propose is the only way forward." (p.35)

That the working class is becoming disillusioned with the Labour Party is neither surprising nor a bad thing in itself, the real question is where this disillusionment is being channelled; to the politics of despair or to the politics of revolution. Revolutionary politics has everything to do with exploiting the difficulties caused by their pursuance of capitalist policies. Our task should not be to throw social democracy a life line, but to ensure that it drowns without trace. It is in this direction that our tactics and efforts should be aimed.

## 3. Towards socialist revolution

### *Specific and general features of revolution — Soviets*

Winning of state power, we are told, "can only be achieved when the *great majority* of the British people are convinced of its necessity and prepared to use their strength and organisation to bring it about." (our emphasis p.36)

Why not say: winning state power can only be achieved when the majority of the *working class* is convinced of the necessity and are prepared to die to bring it about?

"Success depends on *the left* becoming the dominant force in the labour and democratic movement and on the building of a mass Communist Party as part of that left." (our emphasis p.36)

Again, why not put it this way:

Success depends on the Communist Party becoming the dominant force in the working class movement.

It is because the *BRS* is reformist to its core that there is such concern for 'great majorities' and for that amorphous body 'the left'. For a revolutionary strategy it is class forces and alignments which are crucial, above all the determination of the working class to achieve its victory.

Central to the entire strategy of the *BRS* is the gaining of a majority in Parliament "enabling the formation of left and later socialist governments". It is claimed that: "This strategy is based on our (British — JM) political and social conditions, degree of working class organisation, and the new world setting. Every socialist revolution is unique in specific respects. There are universal principles, such as the *transfer* of state power, but no

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universal pattern or model which can be followed."

Then comes the rather incongruous assertion that;

"Export of revolution is a myth." And that "Decisive social change *can only arise* out of the particular circumstances in each country." (our emphasis p.36)

The *BRS* is itself of course "based" on British conditions, it flows directly from illusions fostered by the bourgeoisie and their friends about 'British democracy'. A revolutionary programme certainly must be firmly rooted in the specific conditions appertaining in a particular country. The Bolsheviks could never have succeeded if their programme had not taken into account the existence of the Tsarist autocracy, likewise the Vietnamese party programme recognised the crucial question of gaining national independence and unity. But this said, there is a danger of using supposed 'specific features' as an excuse for throwing out the general laws of revolution. Time and time again, opportunists around the world have maintained that the conditions in their country invalidate this or that principle. And this is exactly what the *BRS* is guilty of, although it professes innocence of such a charge, attempts to cover its crime by paying lip-service to "universal principles". For example the claim that the "transfer of power" is a "universal principle" is a flimsy attempt to sidestep the iron law of revolution, that the bourgeois state must be *smashed* and that a new, proletarian state must arise from the rubble of the old. It is clear that the export of revolution has been inserted in order to parry charges of being agents of a foreign power. Given the *BRS's* emphasis on 'British conditions' and 'democracy', ideas on the international scope of the working class's struggle could be dangerous, outside fraternal assistance is therefore something to be buried by attacks on the export of revolution. But let us now see how the *BRS* envisages the advance to socialism.

"Britain's road to socialism will be *our own* road. The fact that it will be different from that taken in other countries is due not only to the specific position within Britain, but to changes in the world brought about after the October Revolution in Russia, in 1917. This, the most significant event in world history, showed in practice that the workers and their allies could gain state power and construct socialism. But the path of the revolution, insurrection and the creation of the Soviets as organs of power, and the subsequent development of a one-party system, were determined by the particular conditions and background of Tsarist autocratic rule, counter-revolution and civil war, and imperialist intervention. Similarly, the methods by which socialism has been established in other countries have been determined by their particular circumstances and by the world situation at the time.

The different conditions and history of Britain, and the changed balance of world forces, make it possible to achieve socialism in Britain by a different road. The working class is the majority of the population. The potential power of the labour movement is enormous. Together with its allies it can isolate the big capitalists and confront them with overwhelming strength. The democratic forces have had long experience of struggle and have won civil liberties and democratic rights which, though under constant attack, give the basis for carrying forward the political struggle. Parliament, *itself the product of past battles for democracy*, can be, and needs to be, transformed into the democratic instrument of the will of the working class and its allies, who constitute the vast majority of the people. Though there is the possibility of outside intervention against a socialist government, this has been diminished by the change in the world balance of forces.

"Through the democratic transformation of society, including the state, in all the stages of the struggle, *democracy can be carried to its utmost limits*, breaking all bourgeois

restrictions on it, and creating the conditions for advance to socialism without armed struggle." (our emphasis, pp.36-37)

We have quoted at length to leave no shadow of doubt concerning the *BRS's* position.

While it pays tribute to the October Revolution, the *BRS* goes out of its way to *distance itself from the general laws of revolution definitively proved* by that great event. For while there were specific features to the Russian Revolution, such as the overthrow of Tsarism, the government of 'socialists' headed by Kerensky, the extreme backwardness of the country combined with highly advanced features etc, and while there were specific features of its subsequent development, such as the emergence of a one-party system, the victory of Stalin etc., the general laws remain:

1. The necessity of smashing the bourgeois state and its replacement by a new, proletarian one — its most dynamic form being that of soviets.

2. The replacement of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

3. The need for a working class vanguard party based on the most advanced scientific theory.

4. The development of capitalism, the emergence of imperialism, and a world economy means that the struggle of the proletariat becomes ever more unified and international.

It is our contention that the emergence of Soviets, their becoming organs of state power; the smashing of the old state; the dispersal of the bourgeois parliament — the Constituent Assembly; the creation of the Third International; were *all direct products* of the general laws of revolution. Such features of the Russian Revolution are not, as the *BRS* would have us believe, the product of peculiar features of Russia at that time.

Let us look at the *Platform of the First Congress of the Communist International*, we think that it completely vindicates our contention:

"The conquest of political power by the proletariat means the *destruction* of the political power of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois state apparatus with its capitalist army commanded by the bourgeois-Junker officers, with its police and gendarmerie, its gaolers and judges, its priests and civil servants, is the *strongest weapon* the bourgeoisie possesses. The capture of state power must not mean simply a change of personnel in Ministries, but the elimination of the hostile state apparatus, the concentration of real power in the hands of the proletariat, the *disarming* of the bourgeoisie, the counter-revolutionary officers and the White Guard, and the *arming of the proletariat*, the revolutionary soldiers and the Red Workers Guard; the removal of all bourgeois judges and the organisation of a proletarian court; the abolition of the rule of the reactionary civil service and the creation of new proletarian organs of administration. The victory of the proletariat is guaranteed by the disruption of the enemy's power and the organisation of proletarian power. The bourgeois state apparatus has to be *shattered and a proletarian state machine constructed*. Only when the proletariat has finally broken the resistance of the bourgeoisie and is clearly the victor can former opponents be gradually brought under control and made to contribute to the construction of communist society...

"... the new type of state power, known as the *Soviet system*, ensures the proletariat the opportunity of guaranteeing its rights and freedoms in practice. Soviet power provides the people with the best palaces, houses, printing works, stocks of paper etc., for their press, and clubs for their meetings. Only such measures make proletarian democracy really possible... The Soviet system with its right of recall, the combination of legislative and executive power and the consequent position of the Soviets as working bodies, is able to link the masses with the administrative organs. This link is further strengthened by

the electoral system which is based on production units rather than artificial territorial constituencies.

"Thus the Soviet system makes possible genuine proletarian democracy — a democracy for the proletariat, by the proletariat and *against the bourgeoisie*... Only an International, capable of subordinating so-called national interests to the interests of international revolution, will organise aid on an international scale, for without economic and other kinds of mutual support the proletariat is not in a position to build a new society." (our emphasis, *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, London 1980 pp.40-45)

Have the general laws, proclaimed by the Communist International been invalidated by subsequent events, do the conditions prevailing today force us to reconsider them?

We think not!

The state machine in Britain, like all others in imperialist countries, is a bureaucratic-military one. It has a huge military machine costing over £7 billion p.a., 300,000 armed men, and a massive bureaucracy. For the masses, democracy remains only formal, Parliament is a thoroughly bourgeois institution, and terror is always just below the surface.

The truth is that the *smashing* of the bourgeois state remains the central task for us today. We too must construct a new proletarian state on the ruins of the old bourgeois order, the dictatorship of the proletariat must be used to crush all bourgeois opposition. And we would maintain that the most suitable form for the dictatorship of the proletariat to take, the best form for the transition of socialism to communism, are workers' councils or soviets. Yes, soviets in Britain.

Many an opportunist reading this would throw their hands up in the air and burst into rip-roaring laughter. Getting a grip on themselves, they would patronisingly declare that all that stuff is out of date; all right for Russia in 1917 but for an advanced country like Britain? Never!

Well comrade opportunist, it is you who should be laughed at, not patronisingly but with contempt. For you do the work of the bourgeoisie in the workers' movement, foster myths about 'democracy' and the possibility of using the bourgeois state to build communism. Such 'open-minded' fools as you are prepared to consider every hair-brained scheme some liberal professor dreams up about a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic capitalism being transformed into socialism. But when it comes to the lessons of Marxism, your tolerance vanishes in a flash, to be replaced by an insistence on a concerted struggle against 'doctrinaire and sectarian ideas'. You opportunists are prepared to tolerate every bourgeois and petty-bourgeois attack on Marxism, but you fight for the exclusion of revolutionaries, above all Leninists, in your blind hatred of all those who defend the socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union, and those who refuse to be taken in by your milk-and-honey descriptions of the bourgeois state.

How did Lenin consider the struggle for democracy in the advanced capitalist countries? At the First Congress of the Communist International he declared:

"Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the 'purer' democracy is, the more marked, acute and merciless

the class struggle becomes and the 'purer' the capitalist oppression and bourgeois dictatorship." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.28, p.461)

It is for this reason that we struggle for civil liberties and democratic rights in Britain today, to make the true nature of bourgeois rule crystal clear. Any rights gained must be seen in the light of preparing the masses for revolution.

This is something that opportunists utterly fail to 'comprehend' both today and also in Lenin's time:

"... what constitutes their short-sightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices and their political betrayal of the proletariat is their failure to understand that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or that of the proletariat. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty-bourgeois lamentations. That is borne out by more than a century of development of bourgeois democracy and the working class movement in all the advanced countries... This is also borne out by the whole science of political economy, by the entire content of Marxism, which reveals the economic inevitability, wherever commodity production prevails, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that can be replaced by the class which the very growth of capitalism develops, multiplies, welds together and strengthens that is, the proletarian class."

And what is more:

"It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism — the toiling classes." (Ibid, pp.463, 464, 465)

We think that our extensive quotes from Lenin at the first Congress of the Comintern in 1919, when he addressed the world's proletariat, shows what he at least thought about the fundamental laws of revolution. We contend that nothing *fundamental* has changed since then to invalidate Lenin's position. The BRS attempts, dishonestly, to deny these lessons, throwing into the dustbin the laws of revolution, claiming that they are nothing but 'specifics of Russia'. What's more, they whitewash the bourgeois state without even having the decency of presenting any evidence, let alone proof, of how it has supposed to have changed from the thing derided by the Communist International in 1919. Instead, Parliament is described as a "product of past battles for democracy"; bourgeois democracy — certainly, but was this not true when Lenin lived? He and in those days every communist, could only look upon talk by reformists of "transforming" this institution into one serving the masses with contempt, for it is part of the bourgeois state, designed to meet their needs. For Lenin, imperialism represented the last stage of capitalism. But it seems that for the BRS, this is not true. For them, capitalist imperialism can be "transformed" using its military-bureaucratic state machine, into a society which while still capitalist can serve the interests of the masses. In other words, a new stage of capitalism that is not reactionary but progressive. In this way, imperialism is metamorphosed from being ripe for socialism to being the highest stage of capitalism, but one!



Let us conclude our rather lengthy comments on this subsections by dealing more comprehensively with soviets.

Although Marx first wrote about the necessity of smashing the state machine as a result of the lessons he drew from the revolutions of 1848, it was not until after the events of Paris 1871 that he answered the question of what was to replace the old state. When his *well grubbed old mole* resurfaced, it provided the first example of a workers' state machine — *the Commune*.

Although members of the Commune were elected by universal suffrage, Paris had been deserted by its 'upper class' inhabitants, the *fileurs*. As a result, the electorate consisted overwhelmingly of the common people, thus the Commune was the state organisation of this stratum of the population.

The delegates to the Commune were subject to immediate recall, its first decree was to replace the standing army with the armed people in the form of the National Guard. Other measures included regulations limiting the pay of Commune officials to that of workingmen, and the right to elect and recall all members of the judiciary.

This first example of a workers' state enabled Marx and Engels to draw theoretical lessons concerning the future form of state. Their theory was always based on concrete foundations, never on utopian speculation like the *BRS* is. Their scientific conclusions on the state were confirmed with dramatic clarity by first the 1905 and then the February and October 1917 Revolutions in Russia. Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' emerged from the cauldron of the class struggle, and it was in their name the Bolsheviks seized power, creating a workers republic.

The Russian Revolution was intimately linked to the world revolution, a fact witnessed by the subsequent blossoming of soviets throughout Europe. In Hungary, Bavaria, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Bratislava, Bremen, Slovakia and Latvia, short-lived Soviet Republics were established. Italy and Austria were threatened with the victory of soviets; and even in 'conservative' Britain, embryonic soviets emerged in the form of the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committees.

Soviets, like the Commune, were not invented by revolutionary theorists, they emerged from the struggle of the working class itself, as a higher form of class organisation, but similar to trade unions and co-operatives in that they embraced the mass of workers.

The soviets are therefore not specific features of the Russian Revolution as the *BRS* ignorantly pronounces. We see every reason why they should re-emerge, given acute class struggle. This has nothing to do with dreaming, it is based solidly on the history of the working class over the last hundred years, fully in accordance with the expectations and generalisations of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the greatest contributors to scientific socialism.

Unlike parliament, soviets are based on production units, on factories, mills, mines, offices, hospitals, depots — uniting all workers,

overcoming sectional differences, organising workers as a class not as atomised 'citizens'. It is to these organisations we look to, we have no faith in the fetid parliament of the reactionary bourgeoisie. Society organised along soviet lines could be easily transformed to socialism and then to communism, something that could not be said about the *BRS*'s cumbersome reformist concoctions.

### 3.1. Next stage in the revolutionary process

"It is impossible" it is maintained "to proceed overnight from Labour governments which in effect manage capitalism to a government which introduces socialism."

So before socialism, in the mean time, the *BRS* proposes the: "winning of a new type of Labour government, which will begin to carry out a left policy." (pp.37-38) This government: "... has the task of putting Britain on a new course, so that far-reaching changes in society are initiated, the crisis is tackled at the expense of the big capitalists and not the working people, democratic rights are greatly extended and the quality of life and personal freedoms enhanced." (p.38) In other words a left-reformist government.

It would, according to the *BRS*, massively extend the nationalised sector of the economy, abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy, create Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and would pursue an independent foreign policy, and withdraw British troops from abroad immediately (except Ireland).

We would not rule out the possibility of such a government coming into office. Examples of reformist governments are numerous. We have before us the Mitterand-Socialist/ Communist administration in France, likewise Spain and Greece have recently seen the victory of bourgeois workers parties on a reformist platform. The real question is not whether such a government is possible in Britain. No, the question we must ask is could such a government solve the crisis in the interests of the working class? To this we can only reply — no! (For an extensive treatment of the AES and left-reformism see *The Road from Thatcherism or the Road from Marxism?* by Frank Grafton, in *The Leninist*, No.1.)

The fundamental laws of capitalism cannot be negated without destroying capitalism itself. This is true whatever sort of government operates under capitalism. The capitalist crisis can only be resolved on the backs of the workers through increasing the rate of exploitation and/or war. Ideas to the contrary are based on theories utterly alien to Marxism. For us there can be no other form of capitalism before the revolution, there can be no stage we aim at short of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state. Capitalism's crisis is inevitable and can only be overcome positively through socialism, this is what Marxism teaches and what history proves.

### 3.2. A new kind of Labour government

The reformist programme outlined in the *BRS*

could only be implemented in full "as a result of the election of a new type of Labour government". But this would "not be a socialist government carrying out a socialist revolution" but "subsequent left governments" would, with the inclusion of communists, have a "more far-reaching" programme. (pp.44-45)

### 3.3. The relationship between the governments and the Broad Democratic Alliance

All this subsection outlines is the need for the "broad democratic alliance" to support "the Labour governments of a new type" and the need for it to push the government further along the path of reforms.

### 3.4. The revolutionary transition

Here we find the *BRS*'s utopian idea of laying hold of the imperialist bourgeoisie's military-bureaucratic state machine and using it to "transform" capitalism in Britain, through left, lefter, even lefter, even more left, and finally socialist governments, to socialism — the first stage of communism.

To cover its abject reformism, the *BRS* hypocritically declares:

"For social revolution and the transition to socialism, however, state power is critical." Absolutely right! But then it adds: "What is needed is the transfer of state power from the old ruling class to the working class and its allies, and the transformation of the state apparatus so that it serves the needs of the working people." (p.46)

This is a classic example of opportunist sophistry, for while claiming that state power is "critical" on the other hand, it is contradicted by all the nonsense about "transferring" state power, "transforming" *this state* so that it serves the interests of socialism.

### 3.5. Meeting capitalist resistance

#### *Revolution and left-reformism — reaction*

The *BRS* fears that: "The ruling class will fight against this (reformist — JM) process by any possible means." This would include "illegal methods, sabotage and an armed coup". And being good 'democrats', if an election went the 'wrong way', "the Communist Party would respect the verdict of the electors", if the Tories were returned to office, "there would be no question of a coup from the left to reserve the electoral verdict". The *BRS* assures liberal opinion that: "The real danger of a coup would come from the right." (pp.47-48)

Let us begin our comments on the above statements by looking at the possibility of capitalist resistance. Unless there was a develop-

ing revolutionary situation there seems no earthly reason for the capitalists to launch a coup. This truth can be seen from the respectable history of Labour governments in this country, and the Socialist/ Communist government of France today as well as a host of other coup-free reformist examples from Europe and around the world. If, on the other hand, capitalism was plunging into deep economic and political crisis, if the rulers were increasingly unable to rule in the old way then the emergence of a left-reformist government would not only be a distinct possibility, but mounting opposition to it by the forces of counter-revolution could be well on the cards.

In such a revolutionary situation, a left-reformist government would act not as a leadership, a stimulus and focal point for the revolutionary aspirations of the masses; no, on the contrary, it would act as a brake on revolutionary developments. The government forces would see themselves, as it were, between the devil of the revolutionary masses, and the deep blue sea of reaction. It therefore could play in turn, a centrist role and then one of 'democratic' counter-revolution.

This was the situation in Russia in 1917. The Kerensky government made up of two socialist parties, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, faced the counter-revolutionary attempt by Kornilov and the Whites and the revolutionary threat posed by the masses, who were increasingly under the sway of the Bolsheviks.

Kerensky and his left-reformists were pushed by the revolutionary masses to enact far-reaching reforms, making Russia the most democratic country in the world. Later, as the demands of capitalism and the necessities of conducting the imperialist war asserted themselves, the government attempted to reverse many reforms, they banned the Bolsheviks, and went over to the camp of counter-revolution. The Bolsheviks, under the whip of Lenin, considered it their internationalist duty to launch what the *BRS* might call a "coup from the left", or in other words, the October Revolution — an event on which the *BRS* lavishes fulsome praise while dismissing its key lessons.

Even more shocking for the *BRS* would be the Bolsheviks' lack of "respect for the verdict of the electors" when it came to elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1918.

The Bolsheviks had supported slogans demanding the calling of the Constituent Assembly prior to October 1917, and had themselves presided over the organisation of the elections after October.

The Bolsheviks secured an absolute majority of the votes to the Constituent Assembly in Moscow and Petrograd, and were the leading party in most other cities, obtaining 175 seats (around 25%). But this was compared with the Socialist Revolutionaries' 410 seats, which gave them a clear majority in the 707 seat parliament. However, the Bolsheviks argued that the list of candidates drawn up by the Socialist Revolutionaries did not reflect the subsequent split in that party and the

creation of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party which gained substantially from the right in the elections to the soviets. This was a highly important matter, but even more important still was the Bolsheviks' insistence on the primacy of soviets over parliament. For at the Second Congress of Soviets, the Bolsheviks had 51% of the delegates, which together with their (then) allies, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, gave them an overwhelming majority.

So following in the footsteps of Cromwell and Napoleon, the Bolsheviks decided to disperse parliament. But as an illustration of the proletarian nature of the new order, and the contempt felt for the Assembly, it was the head of the military guard who walked in and declared its dispersal "because the guard is tired". The October Revolution had decided where real power was to lie, parliament was irrelevant and thus "the act of dissolution passed almost without protest". (E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol.1, p.130)

Although we consider that in a revolutionary situation, such a government as envisaged by the BRS could come to play a centrist and in the end a counter-revolutionary role, if it were threatened by a reactionary coup, we as revolutionaries, would have to rally to defeat that attempt. This would be done, not to defend 'democracy' but with the aim of enabling the revolution to continue to its conclusion, for any reactionary coup would really be aimed at resolving the revolution negatively — counter-revolution, not merely at toppling a left-reformist government.

## 4. Building a Socialist Britain

This is the last section of the *British Road*. It sets out the essentials (for it) of the new, socialist society. Because these matters are of a long-term nature, for the future, it is understandable why we have less differences with this section. Despite this, there are some areas where we disagree and in addition to stating them, we shall take the opportunity of presenting our positions on some important areas of agreement.

To begin with, we agree in essence with the statement that: "Socialist democracy is not an additional, but dispensable luxury, or something which can be postponed until a socialist economy has been created — it is essential to the building of socialism." (p.50)

### 4.1. The economics of socialism

We also agree, with minor reservations that:

"With the advent of socialist planning and the ending of direct conflict between worker and capitalist employer, the function of the trade unions would change. They would be independent of the state apparatus and active in defending workers' interests, and would also, through the development of industrial democracy, play a vital role in creating the economic basis of socialism, co-operating with the socialist government and strengthening support for it. Management would be democratic, with workers' participation at all levels, in planning industry as a whole and in every enterprise and department. The workers would have a dominant say in

determining the conditions of work. Unions would be responsible for protecting the conditions of the workers and negotiating wages and other benefits. They, with the government, would need to guard against over-centralisation, bureaucracy, and the subordination of the interests of one section of the workers to those of another section. Excessive pressure of production targets, abuses of the work force and unreasonable demands by managements or the central planning authorities would need to be avoided or corrected by the full development of industrial democracy." (p.53)

### 4.2. Foreign policy

#### *Socialism — pacifism — war*

There are a couple of points worth commenting on in this subsection.

The BRS thinks that a socialist government "would renounce war as an instrument of foreign policy." (p.55) This is head-in-the-clouds pacifism. War is the continuation of politics by other means. To renounce war before the end of class society is to renounce politics, and for that matter the real world. Such pacifist sentiments have nothing in common with Marxism.

The Soviet Union has been right not to renounce war as an instrument of foreign policy. From its earliest days it used war/force as a legitimate means to further its interests; the war against the interventionist powers; its counter-invasion of Poland in 1919; its attack on Finland in 1939; its counter-invasion of Germany in 1944-45; and today its part in the war against the counter-revolutionary Islamic reactionaries in Afghanistan. Other socialist countries have never embraced pacifism. On the contrary, they have struggled against it, recognising just wars, often aiding those engaged in violent struggle, including the sending of armed forces. And quite right too! We wholeheartedly agree with *revolutionary* wars.

The second point to note is the claim that: "All movements for national liberation would be supported;" (p.55) Fine sentiments. Does it not contradict renunciation of war? Does it apply to Ireland?

### 4.3. Socialist democracy

We have already made clear our views on matters such as soviets, the state, and parliament. Hence we will confine ourselves to just a few points.

The BRS states: "The freedom of all democratic political parties, including those *hostile to socialism*, to contend for political support would be guaranteed." (our emphasis p.56) And: "All parties should be pledged to respect the verdict of the electors, when elections take place, and to abide by the laws of the socialist state. If parties hostile to socialism failed to do so, and turned to the use of force to sabotage the democratic process, the socialist government and the working people would use whatever force was necessary to defend socialism." (p.57)

Socialism could never *guarantee*, in any absolute sense, especially in the immediate aftermath of seizing power all political liberties. In principle, we would not be in favour of banning political parties simply because they are hostile to socialism. We know of no principle which demands their automatic banning. But after the

seizure of power by the proletariat forces hostile to working class power would find themselves (and we can guarantee this) on the receiving end of the dictatorship of the workers. It could hardly be otherwise.

This said, within the *established* Soviet system, purely bourgeois parties are irrelevant simply because they are not Soviet/workers' parties; they thus find themselves *completely outside* the political system. Consequently, declarations about respecting the "verdict of the electors" with regard to bourgeois parties has no relevance to the soviet system. Workers' parties would compete in soviet elections, and if the Communist Party found itself defeated it would of course respect the result. But in this case there would be no question of reverting to capitalism, such fear under the *established* Soviet system would be an utter absurdity.

One more point worth mentioning is religion; the *BRS* maintains that there:

"... would be freedom of religious worship and propaganda in public or private, equality of all religious beliefs and creeds, and separation of church from state." (p.58)

The problem here is not what is said, more what is left unsaid. There is no mention of the freedom of anti-religious propaganda, and the *struggle by communists* to eliminate religious prejudices and mystical mumbo-jumbo. To 'forget' this, is to fall into opportunism, and as such is inexcusable.

#### 4.4. Popular democratic power

Yes, we are in favour of popular democratic power, and therefore agree with the *BRS* that: "In a socialist Britain there must be the fullest encouragement of... democratic initiatives, as an essential check to bureaucracy and to abuse of power by the state." (p.59)

#### 4.5. Women and socialism (see 5.4)

#### 4.6. Political parties of the working class

This subsection claims that: "Socialism can only be won and built on the basis of Labour-Communist unity." (p.60)

This is feeble-minded nonsense. Every successful struggle of the working class shows the need for Communist hegemony over the working class. Of course the tactic of the united workers' front can be used to achieve this hegemony, but we have already dealt with this elsewhere.

One more point; the *BRS* declares for "open and full debate in which all trends will participate" in both the Labour Party and the Communist Party. This is something we welcome and fully support. Open debate on all questions of principle is a vital prerequisite for the struggle in Britain to be successful.

#### 4.7. Towards a communist society

This is the closing subsection of the *BRS* and while we cannot disagree with it, it is worth asking whether the programme outlined in the *BRS* will ever get us a millimetre nearer socialism, let alone

communism. Why should we base ourselves on utopian reformist dreams when humanity *already has in its possession the most powerful weapon* to liberate itself from the shackles of class society — Marxism-Leninism.

### 5. Some specific questions

While following through the *British Road*, section by section, we have deliberately refrained from dwelling on a number of questions in it which have special significance. We will deal with them here.

#### 5.1. What is Parliament?

According to the *BRS*, Parliament is the "product of past battles for democracy" which given new struggles for democracy can be transformed into an "instrument of the will of the working class and its allies". (p.37)

Parliament was the product of the struggle by the bourgeoisie against feudalism and absolutism. As such, it was a progressive institution reflecting the fact that the emergent bourgeoisie was a revolutionary class. Thus Marx could write about the French and English bourgeois revolutions:

"In these revolutions the bourgeoisie gained the victory; but the victory of the bourgeoisie was at the same time the victory of a new social order, the victory of bourgeois property over feudal property, of nationality over provincialism, of competition over the guild, of partition of estates over primogeniture, of the owner's mastery of the land over the land's mastery of its owner, of enlightenment over superstition, of the family over the family name, of industry over heroic laziness, of civil war over privileges of medieval origin. The revolution of 1648 was the victory of the seventeenth century over the sixteenth century, the revolution of 1789 was the victory of the eighteenth century over the seventeenth century. Still more than expressing the needs of the parts of the world in which they took place, England and France, these revolutions expressed the needs of the whole world, as it existed then." (K.Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, Harmondsworth 1973, pp.192-3, Marx's emphasis)

The progressive bourgeoisie never flinched from using revolutionary terror and violence to secure its ends. The respected historian, Christopher Hill, makes the point that England's embarkation on the course of empire, economic aggression and naval war that enabled it to become the world's first great industrial power was ensured by "Marston moor, Naseby, Preston, Worcester and regicide". (*God's Englishman — Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* Harmondsworth 1975, p.253) The French Revolution was even more bloody, terror was proclaimed as a divine instrument to eliminate all absolutist and aristocratic resistance. And, ironically, considering the *BRS's* worship of Parliament, leaders of the English and French revolutions both dispersed that august body.

Comparing the likes of Cromwell, Fairfax, Paine, Jefferson, Robespierre, Saint Just and Marat with today's bourgeoisie, it is clear that our rulers are epigones; they have more in common with the sixteenth century aristocracy than their own ancestors. They are convinced that they have a divine right to rule, they have a philistine attitude towards social change, they wallow in a decadent culture, and look upon the proletariat with horror.

Because parliamentary democracy is bourgeois democracy, and thus moulded to serve bourgeois interests, it is merely coincidental that it once was a progressive institution. For when property was threatened by the *vast unwashed*, the iron fist was employed. Cromwell went out to crush the Levellers, declaring that: "I tell you sir, you have no other way to deal with these men but break them or they will break you". (ibid p.105) In the same way, Robespierre (who represented the most extreme wing of the bourgeois revolution) eliminated those tendencies representing the *sans-culottes*, the Hebertists and the Enrages.

After securing victory, the bourgeoisie buried their revolutionary past and donned the mantle of reaction. They therefore soon came to portray their rule as 'natural'. In this the English bourgeoisie found a willing tool in the aristocracy in general and the monarchy in particular. In a similar manner, Parliament was given an uninterrupted, undisturbed history by the re-writers of history employed by the bourgeoisie.

Despite all the myths manufactured by the toadies and sycophants, there can be no question that parliament is *part of* the bourgeois state machine. It plays the *legislative role in that machine*, providing a forum where various factions of bourgeois opinion can vent steam and vie for influence. This function is *separated* from the executive role, carried out by other parts of the state machine. So it is not, and never has been, a working body; something abundantly clear to anyone who has ever listened to the pompous, turgid 'debate' in that talking shop, the 'best club in London'.

Although castigating the shallow nature of bourgeois democracy, the BRS perpetrates the greatest lie of all, i.e. that parliament can equally serve all strata, sections and classes in society. In other words, the idea that parliament is above classes. Of course, not so long ago the suffrage was extremely restricted; before 1832 only 4.4% of the adult population were enfranchised; this rose to 16.4% after the Act of that year. It was only in 1867 that any workers had the vote, and no women at all had the vote until 1921; true universal suffrage only became a reality after 1931, when the electorate reached 96.6% of the adult population. So we see that there is nothing inherently popular about parliamentary democracy. However, our opportunists insist, presumably, because of universal suffrage, that the state can be transformed to serve the interests of the masses. This was not Engels's view. Basing himself on the rich history of the German Social-Democratic Party, he was most explicit in calling universal suffrage (although this was before women had the vote, the point is still valid) *an instrument of bourgeois rule*, and that it could be nothing more than: "the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state" (quoted by Lenin CW Vol.25, p.398, *State and Revolution*)

Using universal suffrage the bourgeoisie portray their rule as democratic, attempt to draw the masses into seeing the 'national interest' as their interest. Revolutionaries must use parliament

and elections as a platform, and to gauge the political level of the masses, but that's all. So it is not enough to advocate reforms such as abolishing the House of Lords, establishing Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and creating new committees, the holy icon Parliament must be destroyed lock stock and barrel. Of course in wanting to smash it and the rest of the state machine, we certainly do not wish to do away with democracy. On the contrary we aim to build a *genuine democracy*, where the masses have real power. This can only arise if the sham of the bourgeois democracy, even with universal suffrage, is replaced by soviets.

Today, plans for transforming society via the channel of the royal court, in the manner of intrigues hatched in feudal England by various cabals of aristocrats, would be regarded as at least eccentric if not mad. And yet with the experience of the Paris Commune and soviets, the BRS insists on attempting to breathe new life into the decaying, putrid, body of Parliament. If this is not regarded as madness today, surely in the future our descendants will ponder long and hard in an attempt to explain such patently irrational behaviour.

## 5.2. The Army

These are two important references to the army in the BRS. The first states:

"Democratic changes in the armed forces and police are vital. Britain under left governments would need efficient and adequately-equipped armed forces to defend it against enemies. But it is essential that the domination of their upper echelons by representatives of the capitalist class should be ended, and that members of the forces should have full trade union and democratic rights. This should also apply to the police force, and the use of both for strike-breaking or other actions against democratic rights should be prohibited. Democratic supervision of the police and armed forces by parliament and local authorities should be strengthened." (p.41)

And the second refers to the threat of a right-wing coup.

"The critical problem would be the composition and attitude of the armed forces. This faces the left with four tasks. First, democratic reforms in the armed forces are vital questions for today, and not just in the future. Second, at each stage every effort should be made to strengthen the broad alliance and its support for the left government, since this would have a great effect on the decision of the armed forces on whether or not to act. Third, the left needs to win direct political support from among the armed forces themselves. This would be assisted by the democratic reforms already proposed, and by the way in which the strength and activity of the broad democratic alliance affected members of the forces. Finally, the left governments themselves would need to transform the structure and leading personnel of the armed forces as rapidly as the situation allowed." (pp.48-49)

Apart from the entire assumption that it is possible to lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and use it to change society, these statements contain many illusions, and reformist ideas.

The BRS's "left government" is as we have made clear, nothing but a left-reformist government administering capitalism. For that reason (and that should be good enough for all who consider themselves communists) there can be no support for their 'defence' spending. We stand with Liebknecht's motto: Not a man, not a penny,



for the bourgeois army! For its 'defence' spending can only be defence of the interests of the British bourgeoisie, against either the capitalists of some other state, or the working class itself.

Agitation around certain demands for soldiers, carried out as part of a revolutionary struggle, is an absolute necessity. Demands would be designed to split the army, winning allies for the revolution and giving it a ready armed and trained auxilliary. The key question is not the "composition of leading personnel" of the army, but the need to shatter the entire body.

What should replace the old army? The position adopted by Marx and Lenin could be summed up as *the armed people*. It was only the isolation of the world revolution in Russia that forced the Bolsheviks to take a temporary step back from their aim of replacing the standing army with workers' militias. The facts of intervention, civil war and the cultural and technical backwardness of the country, forced them to build a new standing army, the Red Army.

Although the Red Army was led by communists, it was *in a sense* a bourgeois institution and therefore more of a reflection of Russia's *formal* socialism than of the dawning of communism. For as society evolves towards communism, all bourgeois remnants will wither away, above all the repressive state and its army.

So for us, the question of what is to replace the smashed bourgeois army is determined by the environment socialism emerges into. A standing proletarian army might be necessary but our aim must be its abolition and replacement by the armed people.

But even if we are forced to have a standing army, this 'bourgeois' institution must be firmly counter-balanced by the communist workers' militia based on the soviets. Because an army, even under socialism, is an undemocratic, authoritarian organ, it could pose a block to social progress. Therefore the workers' militia should be equipped with *the most advanced* weaponry, otherwise its power is only *formal*. Today, such weapons would have to include tanks, surface-to-air and anti-tank missiles, anti-chemical and biological equipment, and radar and sophisticated communications equipment. Only then would the workers' militia be *genuine*.

To destroy capitalism in the first place, to split the army, we must build a strong workers' militia. With it, a split in the army becomes possible. For no soldier, no matter how sympathetic to the revolution, would dare come over to us unless we clearly meant business. The demand for a workers' militia *grows out of the class struggle itself*, from anti-fascist action, from the picket lines, from mass demonstrations and from occupations. It is a minimum demand, one that has to be propagated and fought for now, not in the distant future. Without it, talk of socialism can only remain talk.

### 5.3. Ireland

The *BRS* correctly declares that: "Independence should be granted to *all* remaining British

colonies and *all* British troops abroad should be withdrawn." (our emphasis p.43)

It also commits a future "left government" to supporting: "... *all* movements for national liberation" (our emphasis p.55). We concur with these fine sentiments. The problem is that our opportunists seem to have decided to be selective when and where to apply principle. For when it comes to Britain's 'oldest colony' — Ireland, all principle is thrown out of the window. Instead, the *BRS* suggests that Britain:

"... *should ensure a democratic solution in Northern Ireland, based on the implementation of a Bill of Rights, and end of all repressive measures, the withdrawal of British troops to barracks, and financial and other measures to begin to tackle the appalling problems of poverty and unemployment. These steps would create conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended and British troops withdrawn completely. The British Government should recognise the right of the majority of the people of Ireland to rule the whole of their country, and should co-operate with their representatives in bringing this about by consent.*" (our emphasis p.43)

In other words, the *BRS* advocates that the British government should carry out a 'positive colonial policy' along the lines suggested by its spiritual father, Eduard Bernstein, who praised the "civilizing work" of German imperialism in its colonies. (*Evolutionary Socialism*, New York 1961, p.170)

It is to British imperialism which the *BRS* looks for ensuring "a democratic solution", "ending all repressive measures", the overcoming of "poverty and unemployment" and even more far-fetched, "... creating conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended". Only after the 'paddys' have been civilised would it be possible to withdraw completely, but not before British imperialism had co-operated in bringing about the basis for Irish unity, and this of course would only be done with the "consent" of "their representatives".

Of course it is British imperialism which is responsible for the massive unemployment, the appalling housing, the draconian laws and the fostering of sectarianism in the Six Counties. But the opportunists, with their usual sophistry, 'boldly' declare that as British imperialism has caused the mess, they must clear it up. Such an approach might apply to small children, but British imperialism can only reform in the monstrous imagination of reformists. Using their logic, one should propose that, as the Apartheid regime causes racial discrimination and terror in South Africa it must be forced to overcome these problems; or that US imperialism should have been 'forced' to unite Vietnam because they were responsible for maintaining the division!

But the *BRS* is not concerned with the logic of the real world, what they want is a 'socialist' veneer to cover their revolting opportunism on the 'difficult question' of Ireland.

For when it is a matter of abstract principle, the opportunists are quite prepared to mouth anything, but as soon as it comes to putting that principle into practice, then it is a different matter. How else are we to explain the following passage on Ireland from the present *BRS's* immediate predecessor?

"The enforced partition of Ireland should be ended and British

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troops withdrawn from Northern Ireland, leaving the Irish people free to realise their united republic." (*BRS* 1968, p.37)

All four previous editions of the *BRS* dealt with Ireland in a similar vein. None of them contained anything about "troops returning to barracks" or British imperialism solving social ills, let alone being the benign instrument with which to overcome sectarianism and unite the country it divided. And why was there no promise to negotiate with the Paisleyites to ensure that they "consent" to Irish unity? Simply that before 1969, it was a matter of abstract principle. After that, the bombs, bullets and molotov cocktails started to fly.

We do not consider the previous editions to have been in any way Leninist. But they, like the Second International adopting the Basle Manifesto, could uphold a correct principle, at least formally.

Despite all the protestations about the importance of the *BRS*, when confronted with having to put it to the test the opportunists wilted. And without a trace of embarrassment, the party leadership quickly adopted a *new* position on Ireland, only a year after they had all put up their hands for the principled position outlined in the 1968 *BRS*.

In response to the events in the Six Counties in 1969, the leadership *went against their own programme*. With the Irish Workers' Party and the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (they later merged to form the Communist Party of Ireland) issued an appeal for a "democratic solution" to the problems. But this "democratic solution" did not entail the defeat and ejection of British imperialism. No, it was the imperialist government of that dyed-in-the-wool reactionary, Harold Wilson, they called upon to "take action to solve" the problem "without delay" (CPGB leaflet reporting the joint statement of the CPGB, IWP, CPNI, August 3, 1969).

It was only in the 5th (1978) edition that this opportunism was enshrined programmatically. Although this edition talked of support for movements of national liberation, it also contained attacks on those very forces in Ireland. Apparently the actions of the IRA and the INLA are making "more difficult the development of joint action by the working class and labour movements of Britain and Ireland". And their struggle for freedom has been "exploited" by British imperialism. (p.14) It is with such a venal approach that the opportunists not only attack the violence of the oppressed, but also blame the oppressed for the violence of the oppressors!

For Leninists, Ireland is in essence *exactly the same* as any other imperialist colony, hence the only call communists can make is for Britain and all British troops to get out. The IRA and INLA are no different, in essence, from any other liberation movement and therefore our position must be one of unconditional support for them and defeat of 'our own' imperialism.

The main difference between Northern Ireland and other colonies is that Northern Ireland is nearer, it is more important to British imperialism and is even regarded as 'home' by important

sections of the imperialist bourgeoisie. It is due to this that it is far harder to maintain a principled position on the question, being at the same time the very reason why a principled position is so vital.

Being internationalists, Leninists consider it their *duty* to advance their views on the way forward for the working class in Ireland. In our opinion, the Irish working class should fight to establish their hegemony over the national liberation struggle, while at the same time seeking to draw Protestant workers away from their dependency on Loyalism. The struggle against British imperialism, for a united Ireland, must be linked to the struggle for socialism; no stages should be inserted programmatically in this, it must be uninterrupted if all strands are to be drawn together successfully. The aim of communists in Ireland must be communism. Struggles for democratic rights such as national independence must be directed to this end, and never to be considered as separate stages, to be achieved in a definite sequence, one stage needing to be completed before the next can be considered. No, all strands must become united to form a rope, with which we can hang capital.

### 5.4. Women

The two sections dealing with women both suffer from vagueness; platitudes abound and the central relationship between women's oppression and the needs of capitalist accumulation is fudged. We fully agree that: "The struggle for women's liberation is a central political question for the working class. ... the fight for women's liberation is an integral part of the struggle for socialism, and needs to be taken up by the whole labour movement." (p.29) And that "the conditions for their full liberation can only be achieved as socialism is built and society moves towards communism." (p.59)

But despite these fine sentiments, the *BRS* places its faith in the feminists of the "women's liberation movement" or the "autonomous women's movement". Apparently it is feminism which has "highlighted the debate and activity on economic and social issues" which oppress women. (p.30) The *BRS* commits itself to the "personal and sexual politics" of feminism failing to pinpoint the source of women's oppression in class society itself.

For Marxists, women's oppression fundamentally results from the development of class society. Under capitalism this specifically means that women perform *unpaid* domestic labour, they also bear and raise children (future workers, the source of the commodity — labour power) at no cost to the capitalists. As a result of their domestic slavery, women are placed in a marginal position in the labour market, thus constituting a major section of the reserve army of labour — brought into work or thrown out of it with the ebb and flow of the capitalist economy. They are therefore amongst the most vulnerable sections in capitalist society, used as cheap labour, often reduced to doing part-time work, used to divide the working class in an effort to drive down wages and increa

the rate of exploitation.

It is for these reasons that women have every interest in the destruction of the capitalist system. Reforms, as by-products of the revolutionary struggle, must be fought for but real freedom for women lies in the creation of a classless society.

Men have both a short-term interest in drawing women into the workers' movement in order to conduct their common struggle against capital effectively, and a long-term interest in winning women to the revolutionary movement, because without women victory is certainly impossible. These points are not mentioned by the *BRS* which instead dwells on liberal reforms much-liked by the petty-bourgeoisie. For the radicalism of the *BRS* on this question is nothing but a thin veneer covering rotten reformism. Even in the subsection "Women and socialism" the traditional demand for the abolition of the family as an economic unit is missing, despite the fact that this is a key to the liberation of women, freeing them from domestic slavery and from the drudgery of mindbending housework. Only with the abolition of the bourgeois-family can women be fully drawn into social life, freed from their domestic prison and the sentence of being solely responsible for rearing children. By socialising domestic work and the responsibilities for rearing children, both men and women will be liberated — able to develop their relationships free from economic necessity. As Lenin pointed out:

"Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating women, she continues to be a domestic slave, because *petty housework* crushes, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour in barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The *real emancipation* of women, real communism, will begin only where and when an all out struggle begins (led by the proletariat wielding state power) against this petty housekeeping or rather its *wholesale transformation* into a large-scale socialist economy." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, vol. 29, p. 429 original emphasis)

But the *BRS* seeks to tail feminism and the so-called "autonomous women's movement". There is of course no contradiction between the *BRS* and feminism, for both are reformist. However "autonomous" feminism may claim to be, at the end of the day it is only independent of the proletariat — and dependent on capital. By placing the blame of women's oppression on men and not class society, feminism plays a divisive role, channelling women's anger and frustration into useless reformist campaigns and ultimately against men. For Leninists, the word "feminism" is not synonymous with women's freedom, but is a reactionary, divisive ideology. Feminism has everything in common with other sectionalist ideologies such as Black Power and Zionism. It will never liberate women because, although it is a reaction to chauvinism, it itself becomes a type of inverted chauvinism, isolating women from the working class movement.

It is capital, not men, that oppresses women. Women workers have no separate interests from other workers. Our task must be to win working class women from reactionary feminism, and to win the working class as a whole to recognise that they have a vital interest in the liberation of

women. Women's liberation is a task for the working class.

## 6. Why the Centrists cannot fight revisionism

Although the *BRS* is the party's programme, it by no means unites the mass of activists under its banner.

When the Executive Committee of the Party launched the new draft of the *BRS* in 1977, their intention was to repeat the propaganda exercise that introduced the first *British Road* in 1951. But instead of Party members going through the ritualistic 'debate' as before, the 'debate' became real.

Up and down the country, Party militants organised meetings against the draft using the local and district organisations they controlled. The columns of *Comment* were dominated by those for and against the draft, though some, including comrade Fergus Nicholson, mellowed their criticism by calling for the Draft to be "referred back" for further discussion (*Refer the Draft back, Comment* October 1, 1977). The only attempt at a systematic critique of the *Draft* from within the Party was comrade Charlie Doyle's pamphlet: *The British Road to Socialism Draft — Revolutionary Path or Diversion?* It circulated widely inside and outside the Party and was even reprinted by the IMG in *Socialist Challenge*. This was something that the E.C. was not prepared to tolerate; they banned it, using the tenuous argument that as all other members were only allowed 800 words to develop their views on the Draft, it was unfair for some to print their criticisms, (even if they had been submitted and refused by *Comment* and *Marxism Today*).

Despite Canutian efforts, the leadership had to reconcile themselves in the end to the reality of a deeply divided party, something which dominated Party life up to, during, and beyond the 35th Congress in 1977.

The overwhelming majority of the opposition to the *Draft* came from the centrists. For them, the decision in 1965 to change the name of the *Daily Worker* to the *Morning Star*, the condemnation of the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, represented major attacks on the ideological orthodoxy of the past. For those around Sid French "... if the draft is endorsed by Congress, the party remains Communist in name only. In actuality it becomes a left social democratic party with a left social democratic programme." (Surrey District Committee, *Comment* April 30 1977)

Unfortunately, these comrades (with others) did not even fight at the Congress. They and their 700 supporters left the Party and formed the New Communist Party (NCP) in July 1977. According to them:

"The denunciation of the Stalin personality cult and the Hungarian counter-revolution in 1956 were used by revisionist elements to weaken and divide. The party programme, 'The *BRS*' was first revised in 1957 — the start of a process culminating in 1977 which deprived it of all revolutionary content. ...

## The Leninist

"In 1965 the *Daily Worker* had its name changed to the *Morning Star* which marked the definite beginning of the decline... Harry Pollitt had died in 1959, R. Palme Dutt had retired from the Executive Committee and stalwarts like J.R. Campbell, W. Hannington, W. Rust and J. Mahon were gone to be replaced by the likes of G. Matthews, J. Gollan and J. Woddis. ...

"1968 saw the CPGB take the wrong side during the events in Czechoslovakia, and 1977 saw the new draft of the *BRS* — which put the cap on the whole process. ...

"Marxist-Leninist forces within the party, like Sid French, had waged a struggle since 1965 to correct the line but this had proved impossible. So it was that in July of 1977 healthy forces met to form the New Communist Party and renew the struggle on Marxist-Leninist principles." (NCP, *The Revolutionary Party*, 1982, p.27)

It was rumoured at the same time that Sid French split before the Congress because the E.C. was preparing to 'reorganise' Surrey District, French's power base. Some even suggested that both Sid French and Eric Trevett (District Organiser) were to be expelled at the Congress for their undoubted factionalism. To avoid this 'embarrassment' a split was decided upon. This clearly shows that the NCP's formation was determined by purely formal considerations.

This aside, let us examine the NCP's historiography for in essence it mirrors the entire centrist spectrum's mythology about the rightward drift in the party and the 'fight' against it.

The centrists always find themselves defending 'last years revisionism' as opposed to this years. They have never been able to develop a systematic critique of revisionism, instead they indulge in secret worship of Joseph Stalin and lionisation of Harry Pollitt (thus *Straight Left's* Harry Steel). They are therefore incapable of taking their criticism of the rightward drift of the party and the *BRS*, back to its origins.

Their problem arises because it was Harry Pollitt himself, along with other Party "stalwarts" like Dutt, Campbell et al, who presided over the launching of the *BRS* in 1950. This was made abundantly clear by Pollitt's protege. John Gollan, reporting to the 22nd National Congress in 1952.

"In drawing up our programme, the Party has been guided by the advice given by Harry Pollitt at our Executive Committee in July 1950, when he said:

"Our Party must and can formulate such a statement of policy as, alongside our fight for immediate demands, will attract wide attention, discussion and support. It must be concrete and not general. It must be immediately practicable and not only possible after some capitalist and Transport House bogey of a "bloody revolution". It must be applicable to British conditions and be based upon them and British institutions." (John Gollan, *Peoples' Democracy for Britain* 1952 pp.3,4)

"Moreover, Gollan made it quite clear that Pollitt received backing for the *BRS* from none other than Joseph Stalin.

"... the CPSU showed considerable interest in what we were thinking when we were drafting the *BRS*. The main ideas advanced in the Programme, particularly that of the possibility of peaceful transition in Britain, were discussed in detail in conversation Harry Pollitt had with Stalin at the time, who approved fully of our approach...

"Following the adoption of the Programme by our Executive Committee in January 1951, it was published in full in *Pravda*, again with Stalin's approval." (John Gollan *Which Road?* 1964, p.36)

"And were the 1951 and 1952 *BRSs* fundamentally different from the 1977 *Draft* or the 1978 fifth edition?

No! If the 1978 *BRS* is revisionist, as all the centrists maintain, there can be no question that earlier versions are also revisionist. All have *exactly the same approach* to central questions such as the state, parliament and democracy. Any differences that do exist are superficial. For example, the 1951 *BRS* claimed to be based on "Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, ..." (p.22). And in place of the 1978's implication that Britain has been turned into some sort of EEC colony, we find the 1951 *BRS* instead obsessed with Britain being a satellite of America... "Britain" it claimed, was being "... turned into a satellite of America... for the first time in history, our country has lost its independence and freedom of action in its foreign, economic and military policy to a foreign power — the United States of America..." (pp.9-10).

British imperialism might be declining, it might have definitively lost its position as number one world robber to the USA after 1945, it might recognise the need for a closer alliance with other imperialist powers in the EEC, but this has nothing to do with 'colonisation', or the end of Britain as an imperialist state — as all editions of the *BRS* imply.

The NCP, Gollan, Woddis and Matthews are all the pathetic epigones of Stalin and Pollitt. Opportunism evolved throughout the 'fifties and 'sixties to become right-opportunism, thus diverging from centrism. The break only became clear after the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968, creating two distinct currents, one which looked to the politics of the Party in the 'fifties as 'pure Marxist-Leninist doctrine', the other being determined to continue its evolutionary path to the right.

Claims by the centrists that the 1977 *Draft* marked a qualitative departure from previous editions, "depriving" the *BRS* "of all revolutionary content" therefore indicate a recognition of the need to cover up the uninterrupted path the *BRS* has traversed, in order to conceal their own opportunist history which included voting for the 1951, 1952 and 1958 editions of the *British Road*.

That Sid French's heirs only place the beginning of his struggle against "revisionism" from the name change of the *Daily Worker* in 1965, is a clear indication that his political tendency had nothing to do with "defending Marxism-Leninism". No, his bucking at that change was because he perceived the divergence of the leadership from centrism. If not, if his was a genuine struggle against revisionism, it would have commenced well before 1965, before the *BRS* was even conceived of; for opportunism has a long history. And if the centrists *have* come to recognise the revisionist nature of the 1951 *BRS*, why do both the NCP and their old stable-mates around *Straight Left* imply that it had "revolutionary content"?

Speaking of *Straight Left*, what does it have to say about the *BRS* and the need for a *communist* programme?

Well, that's an easy question to ask but a hard one to answer. For *Straight Left* reads as if communism were illegal. It claims (for its own peculiar reasons) to be a product of the "broad labour movement" not the Communist Party! It

attempts to step into the shoes of R. Palme Dutt's *Labour Monthly*, which tried to take communist ideas into the labour movement. But *Straight Left* succeeds only in taking the ideas of labourism into the Communist Party. (History repeating itself as farce!)

Looking at *Straight Left* and the writings and speeches of its supporters, it becomes clear that these centrists have nothing to oppose the revisionism of the *BRS* with. All they can do is offer a further refinement. For although they opposed the 1977 *Draft* as a "rationalisation" of the "consistent undermining of Marxism-Leninism in our party". (Glen Baker *Comment* April 16 1977) they have now developed their 'alternative'. Unfortunately this is not a revolutionary road to socialism, carried through with the dictatorship of the proletariat. No, what is offered is nothing more than a *BRS* which bows even lower to the bourgeois Labour Party; like the *BRS*, this is where they believe the dynamic of change will stem from. So although *Straight Leftists* have castigated the leadership's parliamentary roadism, they now indulge in exactly the same sin.

It is their *strategic* approach of tailing the Labour Party, an approach even more abject than the leadership's, that has led the *Straight Leftists* to slide into the liquidationist pit. From there they oppose independent communist electoral activity and sign paeans of praise for Michael Foot, Jim Mortimer and even Denis Healey (it has been reported that one leading *Straight Leftist*, who will remain nameless, prefers the cold war warrior Healey to *Militant*, because "he's got a better position on peace."!!)

Centrists are incapable of developing a systematic critique of the opportunism and revisionism enshrined in the *BRS*, because to do so would require a complete break with centrism itself. In other words, it would necessitate a devastating critique of their own history. Instead of this course, many centrists have developed what can only be described as 'British exceptionalism'. The NCP refuses to generalise its own experience and thus retreats into parochial poverty, while the *Straight Leftists* drone on about Britain being *unique* because of the Labour Party, forgetting (let's be generous) that there are bourgeois workers parties in the vast majority of advanced capitalist countries, which are essentially the same as the Labour Party.

Although the 'British exceptionalists' of the NCP and *Straight Left* represent the majority of centrist forces in the British communist movement at the moment, a pro-party centrist current is slowly coalescing. Because of its pro-party position, this is something we welcome. However, there is no way this tendency, in common with other centrists, can ever develop the systematic critique of opportunism so desperately needed. It is on the shoulders of *The Leninist* that this task falls.

## 7. The importance of a programme

"It is ..." wrote Lenin, "quite natural for Social-Democracy, as

the party of the revolutionary proletariat, to be concerned for its *Programme*, to take such pains to establish well in advance its ultimate aim, the complete emancipation of the working people, and jealously guard this aim against any attempts to whittle it down. For the same reasons Social-Democracy is so dogmatically strict and firmly doctrinaire in keeping its ultimate goal clear of all minor, immediate economic and political aims. He who goes *all out*, who fights for complete victory, must alert himself to the danger of having his hands tied by minor gains, of being led astray and made to forget that which is still comparatively remote, but without which all minor gains are hollow vanities." (V.I. Lenin, *CW* Vol.8, p.427 original emphasis)

There can be no question that the *BRS* represents merely a 'watering down' of a principled programmatic position. It stands as a monument to the complete subordination of principles to the "hollow vanities" of immediate economic and political expediency. In other words it is reformist.

A programme is not a matter of the icing on the cake, on the contrary, it is the foundation for the building of the party's strategy and tactics. The programme represents the crystallisation of the party's principles and overall strategic approach to the conquest of state power by the proletariat.

If a programme is faulty, it can endanger the successful conclusion of the revolution. Genuine revolutionaries must therefore never be content until they have a programme solidly based on Marxism-Leninism. It is for this reason we are critical of the *BRS*, for unless it is replaced, disaster hangs over us like the sword of Damocles. In a non-revolutionary situation a *BRS* type government could only result in a reformist whimper, like the Mitterrand administration. But in a revolutionary situation, such a programme could result in the bloody counter-revolutionary terror witnessed in Chile in 1973. We shall conclude by examining these two possibilities.

### 7.1. France

May 1981 saw the election of Francois Mitterrand as President, and in June this was complemented by the election of an absolute majority for the Socialist Party in the National Assembly. What made these events of particular significance was the subsequent inclusion of 4 Communist Party (PCF) members in the government. In accepting these positions the PCF advanced the same perspective as outlined in the *BRS*, that of acquiring small gains in the 'here and now' in the hope of realising, step by careful step, the goal of socialism. To justify this, the PCF labels the Mitterrand administration 'progressive', in an effort to conceal the bourgeois nature of both Mitterrand and the Socialist Party. Thus the PCF perpetrates what was once called Mitterrandism, or opportunism in practice.

The economic and social policy presented to the electorate by Mitterrand, included extensive nationalisation, a wealth tax, increases in pensions and other social benefits, administrative decentralisation, in conjunction with massive investment to modernise industry and expand the economy; all to be done in the midst of a capitalist world recession. What he was presenting was in other words a French version of our AES.



The new government introduced a few minor reforms, increased pensions, decreed an extra weeks holiday and a shorter (by one hour) working week. However it did not take long for the iron laws of capitalism to assert themselves; the sugar dissolved to leave the bitter taste of the pill.

In November 1981 the government re-imposed Giscard d'Estaing's 1% levy on wages, unemployment was soon spiralling past 2 million, and in July 1982 a halt to all wage increases was ordered. For all their 'socialist' rhetoric they were forced, like any other government of a capitalist nation, to bow before the altar of capitalist accumulation and the rate of profit. The sacrifice of workers' living standards and interests was an absolute necessity that no bourgeois government, including one formed by a bourgeois workers party, could escape from. For the rate of exploitation had to be increased if France was to remain competitive with its imperialist rivals.

The connivance of four Communist Ministers in the carrying out of such measures could only serve to dampen working class resistance. And this is precisely why the Socialist Party (who had an absolute majority in the National Assembly) offered the PCF seats in the Cabinet. With the PCF tamed, discontent could be channelled between the safe banks of parliamentarianism, it would stop the resistance 'going too far'. Hence the PCF's position in government acts as a sort of safety valve, a communist cover for the bourgeois workers party's attacks on the working class.

That the PCF excuses attacks on the working class of its own country is plain to see, but some feeble-minded centrists look upon Marchais' international position, his sympathetic response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the declaration of martial law in Poland in particular, as evidence of 'pro-Sovietism'. But *foreign policy* is and can only be an *extension of domestic policy*. Marchais and the PCF are utterly opportunist at home, their 'hard line' on foreign issues is equally unprincipled, designed to try and maintain the support of class-conscious workers in France. For the PCF participates in a government which is unquestionably anti-Soviet. It has deployed new weapons against the Soviet Union including medium-range land-based nuclear missiles and submarine-launched nuclear missiles. Compared with his predecessor Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterand is rightly portrayed as being more pro-US as an 'Atlanticist'. But despite this they are in essence identical — for they both serve the interests of French imperialism.

Mitterand's government, like all governments in imperialist states can only be reactionary. There is nothing 'progressive' about him or imperialism. The task of communists is not to provide a cover for reaction but to expose it to the workers thereby preparing them for the only progressive outcome from imperialism — proletarian revolution. That the PCF fails to do this is the result of its utter opportunism. The only use they serve is to show communists around the world opportunism in practice, and for Britain this should be read as *the BRS* in practice.

## 7.2. Chile

The election of Mitterand occurred in the absence of a revolutionary situation, it was thus no different from the election of a Labour government in Britain with a MacDonald, Attlee or Wilson at its head. However things were different in Chile.

Salvador Allende's election as President was at a time of a *rapidly maturing revolutionary situation*. The bloc of parties backing Allende and forming the government under him was centered on the two main workers' parties, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, which were both dominated by opportunists, but Popular Unity also included a number of parties based on the petty-bourgeoisie, as well as the bourgeois Radical Party. It was no revolutionary alliance, uniting different forces on the basis of a commitment to overthrow the existing state through revolution. Equally, the presence of the Communist Party had nothing to do with its pursuance of the united workers' front tactic; Popular Unity was not a workers' front but a left-reformist alliance, socialist only in word.

The Communist Party was fully committed to Popular Unity, it was in fact its prime initiator, its most staunch defender, and fought to broaden it to include the country's main bourgeois party, the Christian Democratic Party. Their conception of Popular Unity flowed from the party programme, which was subordinated to constitutionalism, rejecting revolution and civil war, and conceiving of socialism developing gradually whereby sections of the bourgeoisie and their state machine are won over, slice by slice. The Party leaders painted a highly inaccurate picture of Chile's 'democratic' traditions, the loyalty of the armed forces to the constitution, and the economy's total dependence on imperialism — playing down the development of Chilean-based capital.

So in general the outlook of the Communist Party of Chile was remarkably similar to the BRS, despite obvious differences in history, traditions and economic level between Britain and Chile.

Permeating the CPC programme was the theory of stages. Before the 1973 fascist military coup, the aim of socialism was prefixed with the 'democratic stage'; in reality this meant putting off the fight for socialism to the distant future. This conception has been used since 1973 for equally opportunist reasons. The "chief task" writes Orlando Millas, a member of the Political Commission, "is to defeat fascism and restore democracy and this task must unite and mobilise the whole people." (*Stages of the Struggle in The Lessons of Chile* CPC p.8). So here we find the aim of defeating open bourgeois dictatorship only to restore bourgeois democratic dictatorship.

There are, and were democratic tasks to be carried out in Chile, but these must be drawn into the overall struggle by the proletariat for their own aims. To place endless stages in front of the proletarian dictatorship only undermines the struggle for socialism. Today, the battle against

the fascist military junta is one that can unite a broad spectrum of the Chilean masses. The duty of Chilean communists is to gain hegemony over this anti-fascist movement, not with the aim of placing in power some different faction of the bourgeoisie but to ensure that after the overthrow of the fascists, the revolution develops uninterruptedly towards socialism. There being no need for a second, specifically socialist, revolution. In this way the struggle for democracy, against fascism, and for independent economic development, would be led, used, and resolved by the workers fighting for their own rule.

Despite all the 'radicalism' the opportunists insert into reformist schemes, cold reality soon sorts the utopian chaff from the demands of bourgeois legality. Hence the necessity of securing Christian Democratic approval for appointing Allende as President, meant that Popular Unity agreed never to act unconstitutionally. Later, to win co-operation from the army chiefs, all political agitation in the ranks of the armed forces was prohibited. For the same reason the government allowed squads of soldiers to terrorise and torture workers and peasants who attempted to arm themselves.

So it is clear that the Allende government was not revolutionary, it never seriously attempted to break from the confines of bourgeois legality for it was in truth a left-reformist bloc, attempting to blunt the tide of revolution by enacting far-reaching reforms. At the same time it was petrified with fear at the growing danger of counter-revolutionary fascist terror, which promised to stem the movement of the masses with blood and iron.

Writing in *The Lessons of Chile* comrade Volodia Teitelboim, a member of the CPC Political Commission and leader of the Party while Corvalan was incarcerated, declared unashamedly:

"Throughout the period of Popular Unity rule, Chile was under a kind of dual power, which cannot of course, be compared to the situation in Russia in 1917. In Chile there was a lawful popular government and on the other hand, an unlawful reactionary power backed by all who earlier had dominated society. In addition to certain key economic and financial layers and the mass media, that reactionary power controlled a considerable part of the state apparatus." (*Reflections on the 1,000 days of Popular Unity rule* Ibid p3)

Allende and the creation of the Popular Unity government, is counterposed to the rest of the state machine, still under reactionary control. From this he claims that the Allende government represented some sort of proletarian faction of the state. In this, Russia's Kerensky was identical. He was a socialist (a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party) and his government included Marxists from the Mensheviks. Of course, the real revolutionary aspect of dual power in Russia was not Kerensky's left-reformist government but the Soviets of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers. In addition to facing the aspirations of the masses as represented through their Soviets, Kerensky was fully aware of the threat from the right, including the officer corps.

Allende's government like Kerensky's showed

all the signs of centrism, as such a block to the development of the revolution.

A "kind of dual power" was developing, not inside the bourgeois state or any such nonsense, but in the factories. Embryonic soviets, the *cordones* were committees elected from the factory floor: delegates were subject to recall, and as a result they reflected the political level of class-conscious workers, meetings were open to all political tendencies and they united all sections of the proletariat. The *cordones* developed in most industrial centres, sparked into life by an early threat of a military coup. Despite initial objections to them from the trade unions (led by the CPC) they eventually united all major tendencies. Sadly, because of the lack of a vanguard party solidly based on Marxism-Leninism and determined to see the revolution through to the end, the *cordones* slowly withered, never revitalising, even on the eve of the 1973 coup.

The *cordones* represented embryonic dual power. It was to these institutions that revolutionaries should have looked, sought to nurture, and to transform into organs of state power. To look to the bourgeois state for the key to socialism is the negation of revolution. It is and can never be anything else but reformism.

It was tragic for the Chilean working class that the Communist Party was under the domination of opportunists who resolutely fought any moves to break from the reformist path, whether from within the Party or the working class. Strikes, illegal occupations, the *cordones*, the arming of the masses and agitation inside the armed forces were all opposed by the CPC leadership, because of their aim of creating an alliance with the Christian Democrats and their need to remain within the bounds of bourgeois legality.

Before the 1973 coup, leaders of our Party promoted the Chilean road as the *British Road* in practice. Parallels were drawn between the 'long democratic tradition', 'constitutional army' and 'strong organisations of the working class' of Britain and Chile. Numerous articles in the *Morning Star*, *Comment* and *Marxism Today* enthusiastically championed Popular Unity and emphasised its similarity to the *BRS* strategy. Of course, come the coup on September 11, and everything was thrown into reverse gear. In a piece of political dishonesty which takes some beating, Party leaders turned their previous position on its head. We were presented with Chile's lack of democratic traditions, its backwardness, even the activities of the ultra-left as reasons for failure. But these were diversions. The only conclusion that any communist worthy of the name could come to is that *the reformist road can only lead to disaster for the working class*. But as we know, opportunism is based not on something as honest as intellectual misconceptions. It has deep social roots which tie it to bourgeois society and bourgeois legality. Our struggle is not to convince the opportunists of their errors, that would be futile. Our aim is *to break the hold* opportunists have over the working class, for *only if this is done* can we avoid the bloody disaster of Chile. □

# The General Crisis and the World Balance of Forces

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Frank Grafton

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At a time when the world capitalist system is experiencing a renewed return towards economic crisis and imperialist war-drive after the prosperous and stable decades of the postwar boom, the greatest threat facing communist organisation and Marxism as a revolutionary doctrine, is the continuing growth of opportunism in the world communist movement. In the last decade, this has matured in many communist parties of the capitalist countries to the advanced form of Euro-communism, a trend that has increasingly distanced itself from living socialism, and adopted an ever more reformist and liquidationist stance, as it ingratiates its politics with the imperialist bourgeoisie against the ideas and practice of socialist revolution.

Opportunism as a visible trend is not a recent phenomenon, but began to take root in a serious way inside various communist parties as early as the 1930s. This was often the result of attempts to build a genuine base among the working class masses, to become more popular and more attuned to the struggle against fascism, after the traumatic losses in membership and support during the 'left sectarian' period of 1928-33, when the Comintern castigated social democracy as 'social fascist'. The changes brought about by the Seventh Congress of Comintern in 1935, including the resolution giving greater autonomy to each national section, facilitated the growth of right opportunism. For example, the then general secretary of the CPGB, Harry Pollitt, was forced to resign in 1939 for his support of British imperialism against Hitler, before the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 had changed Comintern's attitude towards the war. This was no aberration, for we believe it was a clear sign of the opportunist leanings of Harry Pollitt. The dissolution of Comintern in 1943, while being an act of appeasement to imperialism in itself, accelerated the process by which opportunism openly emerged.

It was not until the new conditions of stability had arisen in the imperialist countries after the Second World War, that opportunism took a programmatic form, of which the 1951 publication of *The British Road to Socialism*, was the very first. The *British Road* had already dropped the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and rejected the universal applicability of soviets as organs of power. The whole tenor was parliamentary reformist, implying the possibility of a transformation to socialism via peaceful reforms, "without civil war". The latest 1978 version of *The British Road* theoretically supports this idea with the claim that, "... a decisive tilt in the balance of world forces has taken place in the

direction of socialism and progress." (*BRS* p.12, 1978). By this, the authors imply that the forces of imperialism have been surpassed by the forces of socialism and national liberation, to the extent of changing the character of the epoch and of preventing the imperialist bourgeoisie from waging civil wars in their own defence. The Euro-communists — who essentially revised the latest document — have at least found something positive to say about the socialist countries. If we were to say that this theory of 'world balance of forces' belonged to the Euro-communists, however, we would be wrong. It actually originated during a postwar debate inside the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and even has roots going back to J.V.Stalin himself.

The central theme of this theory is not only that imperialism slid into general crisis after 1914, but continued into: 'The third stage of the general crisis' after 1956. It is this 'third stage' which is meant to contain the new balance of world forces in favour of socialism, and was an idea consummated at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, and later incorporated more fully, into the 1961 *Third Programme* of the CPSU.

In our view, there was indeed a general crisis of capitalism during and between the two world wars, but this was eventually resolved after the late 'forties. To say that imperialism continued to remain in general crisis thereafter, when that system could boast of quadrupling industrial production, of doubling workers' living standards in the imperialist countries and of enjoying unprecedented political stability, is a distortion of the Marxist understanding of capitalist crisis. Marx's analysis of crisis specified the economic cause of capitalist overproduction giving rise to sharpening class antagonisms. His conclusion was revolution. Opportunism of course always seeks to omit the revolutionary essence of Marxism, "to blunt its revolutionary edge", as Lenin emphasised in *State and Revolution*. For opportunism, the continuation of imperialism into "ever deeper general crisis", while retaining a peaceful stability throughout the postwar boom, had no revolutionary significance whatsoever. For opportunism, it was proof that revolution was no longer the necessary solution for a profoundly unstable and destructive system, revolution was no longer the explosion of historical necessity.

Because these distortions of Marxism on the general crisis of capitalism have emanated from the most experienced, most powerful and influential section of the world communist movement, any analysis of the growth of opportunism must include the historic role performed by the leaders of the CPSU. Although since Lenin's death, they have all steadfastly defended and prepared the Soviet Union against imperialist aggres-

sion and encirclement, they have exhibited a conciliatory attitude to the growth of opportunism in the world communist movement, except in circumstances where it has threatened the security of the Soviet state. Because the heirs to Lenin's mantle have retreated on principle and reconciled Marxism with opportunism, they have conducted a *centrist* role in relation to opportunism, and thus become a major block to the struggle against opportunism. This in the long run has compounded the imperialist threat to living socialism, as it weakens and delays the process, whereby the world socialist revolution will finally triumph.

On the question of the world balance of forces, there is no doubt it has shifted continuously in favour of socialism since 1917. But opportunism in the workers' movement of the capitalist countries rejects revolution as the means of weakening imperialism and strengthening socialism, and in parallel the communist parties of the socialist countries have retreated to the idea of overtaking imperialism via peaceful economic development. Besides being unrealistic in the present world situation, where the historically advanced cultural regions of W.Europe, N.America and Japan remain imperialist, it relegates revolution to a secondary, if not non-existent, role in securing a genuine and everlasting tilt of the world balance in favour of socialism. Furthermore, it sows illusions about the nature of imperialism, as if that system would passively allow its world hegemony to be eroded. Imperialism is imbued with the thirst for war, as the ultimate means for securing its interests. The only way to shift the world balance in favour of socialism, as well as definitely prevent World War Three, is *revolution!*

Our task in this article must be to revive the Marxist understanding of general crises of capitalism, and to illustrate it with the concrete example of the period from 1914 to about 1948. Secondly, we must examine the distortions which have been introduced by centrism and opportunism, and thirdly, scientifically determine the true nature of the present epoch.

## The Historic Background to the General Crisis of Capitalism

The ultimate political significance of all economic crises was most profoundly expressed by Marx in a famous passage of his *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy* written in 1859:

"At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production... Then begins an epoch of social revolution." (Marx-Engels, SW, Vol.1, p.329, Moscow 1949)

The determining issue at the end of the day for Marx was undoubtedly the revolutionary overthrow of the 'old order'. During its early stages of development, the barriers to capitalism emanated primarily from the political restrictions of feudalism and absolutism, and in the twentieth century, this also included the colonial fetters of imperialism. To remove these blocks, the bourgeoisie carried out a series of democratic revolutions, which have been a constant accompaniment to the expansion of capitalist relations throughout the world, and are only now being concluded with the removal of the vestiges of colonial rule in Africa.

Yet besides these 'external' blocks, capitalism has also exhibited economic barriers from 'within' its own development. This fact was noted by Marx and Engels in the historic *Communist Manifesto*, published in February 1848, just prior to the outbreak of revolutions across all Europe:

"It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodic return put on trial, each time more threateningly, the

existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic, that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity — the epidemic of overproduction." (Marx-Engels, SW, Vol 1, p.38)

The roots of the 1848 revolutions lay mainly in the political ascendancy of the European bourgeoisie, but since 1825, crises of overproduction had been breaking out every ten years, and were already a factor in the development of modern revolutionary situations. Marx and Engels recognised that capitalist development would progressively become more important in creating revolutionary opportunities, as well as curtailing them. Engels reiterated these lessons of 1848 in an Introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggle in France 1848-50*, saying that ... "The world trade crisis of 1847 had been the true mother of the February and March Revolutions, and that the industrial prosperity, which had been returning gradually since the middle of 1848 and attained full bloom in 1849 and 1850, was the revitalising force of the newly strengthened European reaction..." (Marx-Engels, SW Vol 1, p.111) The immature level of capitalist development in the nineteenth century, meant that crises of overproduction could still, relatively easily, be overcome by further expansion into the world market, and it was the objective of current bourgeois revolutions to create the conditions for this. Yet the bourgeoisie could never obliterate the recurrence of crises on an ever rising scale, as Marx and Engels again attested in the *Communist Manifesto*:

"And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented." (Marx-Engels, SW, Vol 1, p.38)

The term originally used by Marx and Engels to describe the decennial crises of overproduction, which periodically interrupted capitalist accumulation between 1825 and 1867, was usually 'general crisis' or 'world crisis'. After the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871, most external barriers to economic expansion into the world market by the industrial powers of Europe and America had been lifted, thus delaying the return of another full blown general crisis of the former decennial type. Engels observed this fact during the 1880s and 1890s, remarking, "... every factor, which works against a repetition of the old crises, carries within itself the germ of a far more powerful future crisis." (Footnote by Engels in 1894, *Capital*, Vol III, p.489)

When that crisis eventually did break in the form of the First World War, Lenin described the essential character of the new period as a "world revolutionary crisis" whose underlying economic development was an intolerable deterioration in the conditions of living for the masses, and also the disintegration of the world capitalist economy with intensifying inter-imperialist rivalry and internal class conflict. Lenin never consistently, if ever, applied the phrase 'general crisis of capitalism', as this had by then, been dropped from common Marxist usage. He therefore adopted Kautsky's description of, "an epoch of wars and revolutions".

## Marxist Theory of General Crisis

The most important law determining the development of capitalist accumulation, according to Marx, is the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. This is derived from the process of increasing productivity, of

## The Leninist

employing techniques whereby machines replace living labour. This ensures that the mass of constant capital invested in machines and buildings grows faster than the mass of variable capital invested in labour, of which the latter is the only source of surplus value. This law does not assert itself at all times as capitalism can temporarily counteract it, but when it does, it raises a barrier to capital accumulation, which in the short term, can only be compensated for, by raising the *mass of profit*. This is possible, if capital employs an increasing mass of labour i.e. continues on an extended scale, and more importantly, if that labour is exploited at an ever rising intensity. Therefore the first condition by which the falling rate of profit as a barrier is overcome, is the demand by the capitalist class to increase the mass of profit at the expense of the worker. This increasingly means a reduction in the living standards of the working class.

The second contradiction intensified by the falling rate of profit, is the struggle between capitalists to increase the mass of profit at the expense of each other. Marx states, in relation to this that:

"... a fall in the rate of profit connected with accumulation necessarily calls forth a competitive struggle. Compensation of a fall in the rate of profit by a rise in the mass of profit applies only to the total social capital and to the big, firmly placed capitalists. The new additional capital operating independently does not enjoy any such compensating conditions. It must still win them, and so it is that a fall in the rate of profit calls forth a competitive struggle among capitalists, not vice versa." (K.Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, p.256)

So long as capitalism can compensate for the falling rate of profit with a rising mass of profit, it offsets the slide into crisis, but at the expense of sharpening class antagonisms between capitalist and worker, and between capitalist and capitalist. At this stage, overproduction is 'relative', and only applies to those capitals which are too small and too slow in growth, and which are thus ousted out by the larger and more competitive capitals.

The next stage, where the period of falling rates of profit precipitates a crisis, occurs when the *overproduction of capital becomes absolute*. And when does the overproduction of capital become absolute? Marx answers with the following:

"There would be absolute overproduction of capital... when the increased capital produced just as much, or even less, surplus value than it did before its increase... i.e., the increased capital  $C + \Delta C$  would produce no more, or even less, profit, than capital C before its expansion by  $\Delta C$ .

"In both cases there would be a steep and sudden fall in the general rate of profit, but this time due to a change in the composition of capital not caused by the development of the productive forces, but rather by a rise in the money-value of the variable capital (because of increased wages) and the corresponding reduction in the production of surplus-labour to necessary labour." (K.Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, pp.251-2)

This means that the falling rate of profit is no longer compensated by a rising mass of profit, as the working class resists further cuts in its standard of living (Marx hypothesises a situation where workers actually increase real wages at the expense of the capitalists' profit). The rising class conflict between labour and capital consequently becomes an *absolute block* to further capital accumulation. (This is totally different to the theory purposed by the authors of the *Profit Squeeze*, Glyn and Sutcliffe, who reject Marx's explanation of the falling rate of profit as resulting from increased productivity, and propose that the workers' struggle for higher wages from the start is the cause of declining profit margins, thus turning the process on its head).

How is the conflict settled in favour of restoring conditions for the sound operation of capitalist production, thus overcoming the crisis of absolute

overproduction? Again, here is what Marx says:

"... the equilibrium would be restored under all circumstances through the withdrawal or even the destruction of more or less capital ( $\Delta C$ )." (K.Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, p.253)

Yet besides the antagonism between labour and capital, it is evident that this destruction of capital would also inaugurate a conflict between capitalists:

"It is evident, however that this actual depreciation of the old capital (C) could not occur without a struggle, and that the additional capital ( $\Delta C$ ) could not assume the functions of capital without a struggle... A portion of the old capital has to lie unused under all circumstances; it has to give up its characteristic quality as capital, so far as acting as such and producing value is concerned. The competitive struggle would decide what part of it would be particularly affected... as soon as it is no longer a question of sharing profits, but of sharing losses, everyone tries to reduce his own share to a minimum and to shove it off upon another... competition then becomes a fight among hostile brothers. The antagonism between each individual capitalists' interests and those of the capitalist class as a whole, then comes to the surface." (K.Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, pp.252-3.)

In this passage, Marx has incisively revealed the qualitative difference in the class struggle that has come about due to the onset of crisis. Unlike the previous period where despite the struggle between capitalists for a rising mass of profit, capitalist accumulation is still able to proceed, *the crisis invokes open war*.

Finally, it is extremely useful to read Marx's very comprehensive description of the features which characterise all crises of general overproduction, and how conditions for recovery are prepared. He begins by explaining how destruction of capital takes different forms:

"This would extend partly to the material substance of capital i.e. a part of the means of production, of fixed and circulating capital, would not operate, not act as capital; some of the operating establishments would then be brought to a standstill. Although in this respect, time attacks and worsens all means of production (except land), the stoppage would in reality cause far greater damage to the means of production...

"The main damage, and that of the most acute nature, would occur in respect ... to the *values* of capitals. That portion of the value of a capital which exists only in the form of claims on prospective shares of surplus value... is immediately depreciated by the reduction of the receipts on which it is calculated... Part of the commodities on the market can complete their process of circulation and reproduction only through an immense contraction of their prices, hence through a depreciation of the capital which they represent. The elements of fixed capital are depreciated to a greater or lesser degree in just the same way. It must be added that definite, presupposed, price relations govern the process of reproduction, so that the latter is halted and thrown into confusion by a general drop in prices. This confusion and stagnation paralyses the function of money as a medium of payment... The chain of payment obligations due at specific dates is broken in a hundred places. The confusion is augmented by the attendant collapse of the credit system, which develops simultaneously with capital, and leads to violent and acute crises, to sudden and forcible depreciation, to the actual stagnation and disruption of the process of reproduction, and thus to a real falling off in reproduction." (K.Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, pp.253-4)

From this, we can summarise. The destruction of capital takes two forms; the first due to forced idleness, where machines rust and workers are deprived of their jobs; and the second is through depreciation of values, through falling prices and stock exchange crashes. The result is not only total disruption of production, but also dislocation of circulation through the medium of money. This occurs, partially because of the severance of exchange relations between gold and paper currencies, but increasingly because *the credit system collapses*. This is in total contrast to the previous period of falling profit rates, when the dramatic extension of the credit system to its limits, is the *primary mechanism* through which the mass of profit is raised. It is essentially the



inability to raise the mass of profit during the crisis, that removes the last prop of capitalist expansion, and which therefore underlies the collapse of credit.

Out of this traumatic disruption of capitalist production, Marx describes how profitability is re-established:

"But there would have been still other agencies at work at the same time. The stagnation of production would have laid off a part of the working class and would thereby have placed the employed part in a situation, where it would have to submit to reduction of wages even below the average. This has the very same effect on capital as an increase of the relative or absolute surplus value at average wages would have had... On the other hand, the fall in prices and the competitive struggle would have driven every capitalist to lower the individual value of his total product below its general value by means of new machines, new and improved working methods, new combinations i.e. to increase the productivity of a given quantity of labour, to lower the proportion of variable to constant capital, and thereby to release some labourers; in short, to create an artificial over-population. Ultimately, the depreciation of the elements of constant capital would itself tend to raise the rate of profit. The mass of employed constant capital would have increased in relation to variable, but its value could have fallen. The ensuing stagnation of production would have prepared — within capitalistic limits — a subsequent expansion of production." (K.Marx, *Capital*, Vol III, pp. 254-5)

Again we can summarise the essence of this passage. The capitalist class attempts to restore profitability, firstly, by intensifying the rate of exploitation of labour. This includes increased productivity by utilising new techniques, which raise the relative and absolute rates of surplus value (this means making the worker operate at faster rates of production and for longer hours). On top of this, the capitalist forces a reduction in wages, not only because prices are also falling, but in order to *lower living standards below their previous level*. These factors existed in the period prior to the onset of crisis, but *only acted as tendencies*. Unemployment due to increasing productivity is constantly present at all stages of the industrial cycle, but is raised to its maximum during the crisis, not only because capitalists and more frenziedly replacing labour with machines, but also because factories are forced to stand idle. It is because of this crushing weight of unemployment during the crisis, that the deterioration in living conditions of the workers becomes not only a tendency, but *absolute*. It is in conjunction with this process, that the depreciation of capital prepares the ground for a *future rise in the rate of profit*.

These are the *general features* of all crises of overproduction, including those in the imperialist era. Obviously the conditions have changed since Marx's day, when *full blown general crises* only lasted a few months or years, allowing a full industrial cycle to be completed within ten years. In the imperialist era, the cycle has been extended over much longer time spans, and we can now show that the crisis which began in 1914 was only resolved after the Second World War, and moreover, was the continuous manifestation of a single general crisis, whose underlying economic cause was the absolute overproduction of capital. Of course, more frequent partial crises, or recessions, occur, which in our opinion express the severity of contradictions in any given period, but do not fully resolve those contradictions for the next cycle in the way that a genuine general crisis does. The 1929 slump represented the deepest recession in the history of capitalism, as it reflected the overall period as one of general crisis, whereas the mildness of the 1957 recession showed the postwar period to be generally one of rising profits and boom.

We can now proceed to illustrate the Marxist theory of general crisis with the period 1914-c.1948 depicting the general features described by Marx. In addition to this, it is important to mention how imperialism has modified the political and economic 'mechanisms' of

capitalism, thus manifesting general crisis on a far more destructive and extensive scale than 19th. century competitive capitalism. For this, we must turn to Lenin's major contribution to Marxist economics, his analysis of *Imperialism*, as *the highest stage of capitalism*.

## Imperialism — The Highest Stage of Capitalism

Imperialism emerged during a period between 1870 and 1914, when the falling rate of profit had become a particularly stubborn block to the growth of capitalist production, and its development was primarily motivated by the need to increase the mass of profit as compensation, to exploit labour on a more extensive scale. The main economic change brought about by this process was the "... displacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly." (V.I.Lenin, *Imperialism The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, CW, Vol 22, p.265, Moscow 1977.) Lenin describes this development in the following way:

"... monopoly is the exact opposite of competition, but we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our very eyes, creating large-scale industry and forcing out small-scale industry, replacing large-scale by still larger-scale industry, and carrying concentration of production and capital to the point where out of it has grown and is growing monopoly: cartels, syndicates and trusts, and merging with them, the capital of a dozen or so banks, which manipulate thousands of millions. At the same time the monopolies, which have grown out of free competition, do not eliminate the latter, but exist above it and alongside it, and thereby give rise to a number of very acute, intense antagonisms, frictions and conflicts. Monopoly is the transition from capitalism to a higher system." (*Ibid*, pp.265-66.)

Imperialism is the stage at which capitalist production outgrows national boundaries and expands beyond. The exploitation of labour on a world scale, by means of exporting capital, temporarily overcomes the barrier of falling profit rates, as monopoly and finance capital expropriate greater masses of *super-profits*. In turn, this provides monopoly capital with the economic basis "... to bribe certain sections of the workers, and for a time a fairly considerable minority of them, and win them to the side of the bourgeoisie of a given industry or given nation against all others." (*Ibid*, p.301.) Monopoly capitalism thus seeks to both forcefully suppress internal class contradictions within a country by "throttling those who do not submit to them, to their yoke, to their dictation" (*Ibid*, p.206), as well as mollifying them through the more subtle method of cultivating opportunism. Rather than eliminating class antagonisms altogether however, monopoly capital forces them 'upwards', raises them from the local to the national, from the national to the international stage, thus forcing them to find vent in a more extensive and virulent form.

The outbreak of World War in 1914 signalled the beginning of general crisis in the imperialist epoch. By defusing class conflict in the short term, imperialism had delayed the onset of crisis, but prepared the way for an even more destructive one, by bottling up social, economic and political pressures. The onset of general crisis, moreover, accelerated the 'coalescence' of monopoly capital with the state, thereby transforming monopoly capitalism into state monopoly capitalism. By seizing the state as the foremost political and economic instrument for defending its class interests, both against the working class and rival imperialists, monopoly capitalism had placed the question of state power to the fore. State monopoly capitalism was therefore the basis for the manifestation of general crisis as an *epoch of imperialist wars and proletarian revolutions*.

other hand, was bloodily suppressed by the onslaught of fascism. It consequently returned for a third time with the retreat of fascism after 1943, until the onset of the Cold War in 1948, when it was forced to ebb for the last time.

So what were the economic features of the general crisis? The world credit system continued to extend after 1914, but because the conditions for producing surplus value had already become seriously attenuated, it became progressively *speculative*. Figure 2 shows America and British interest rates 'peaking' between 1914 and 1920, during which time, the debts of all major European powers had risen sevenfold. (See V.I. Lenin, *CW.*, Vol.31 p.219). The US had been transformed from a pre-war debtor into the world's top creditor, by exporting arms and grain to Britain in return for British securities in the US economy and elsewhere. Britain was still the second largest creditor but had now gone half-way to becoming a debtor. All other countries in Europe by 1920 were hopelessly in hock. Only America could sell, but nobody else could afford to buy — this was the dilemma confronting the world capitalist system after the First World War.

After 1920, the world credit system began to contract, and despite a temporary recovery in the late 'twenties, it finally collapsed in the 1930s. The instability of the credit system in the 1920s was best illustrated in Germany where the government attempted to pay the war indemnities exacted by France in 1923, by printing money. The result was hyper-inflation, whereby the Deutsch Mark lost all relation to value.

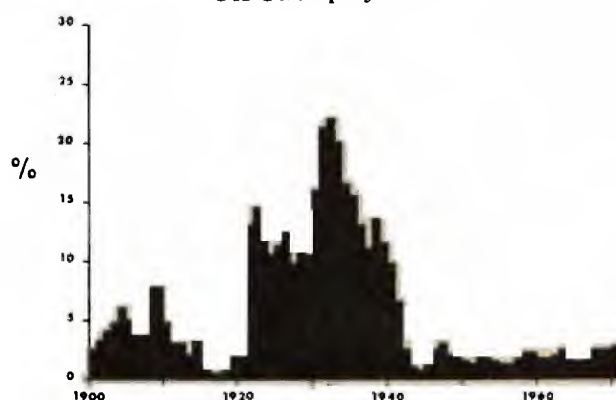
The fact that the credit system did not collapse was primarily due to the capacity of the US economy to still expand. According to Maurice Dobb, the North American index for general production was up 26% in 1925 on the 1913 level, whereas the increase for capitalist Europe as a whole was only 2%. However, most of this new American investment, including the massive capital exports to Germany and Europe, was concentrated in re-equipping factories. Capital goods production in the US, for example, expanded by 70% between 1922 and 1929, thus exacerbating the problem of overproduction (See M. Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* pp.331-2, London 1947). By 1929, the disparities in overproduction between America and Europe had disappeared, and nothing could delay the crisis from plunging to its greatest depths.

The destruction of surplus capital, through depreciation of values and forced stoppages in production began after 1920. The recession of that year transformed the previous inflation into a period of falling prices, which continued through to the 1930s. In parallel to this, factories were either operating below capacity or closing down altogether. R. Palme Dutt in his book *World Politics 1918-1936*, quotes figures to show that US production was operating 20% below capacity even during the so-called 'boom' prior to 1929 (pp.94-5) and reached levels of 30-50% for all major capitalist economies after the 1929-31 crisis. Industrial production in the capitalist world as a whole fell by 24% between 1929 and 1934. As an indicator of productive idleness, Figure 3 shows the rate of unemployment for Britain and the US. The former was the least effected of all imperialist countries during the 1930s slump, and the latter was the least effected during the 1920s. At the height of the economic crisis, unemployment reached levels of over 20% in nearly all major capitalist countries. This signified a massive destruction of capital worldwide.

The destruction of capital was no longer conducted in an 'anarchic' manner as happened in Marx's day, but became *supervised* with the development of state

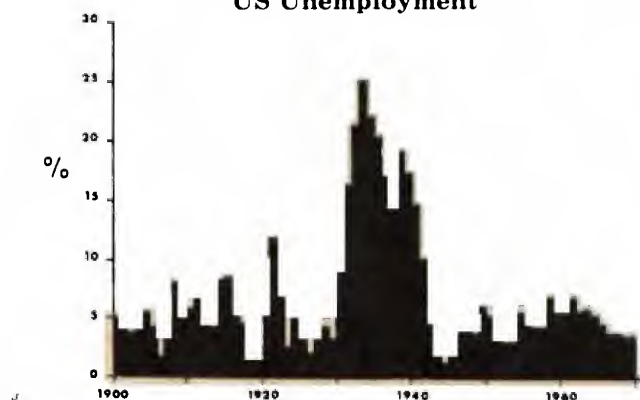
Figure 3

## UK Unemployment



(Source: Annual Abstract of Statistics)

## US Unemployment



(Source: Historical Statistics of US)

monopoly capitalism. Here is what Palme Dutt says:

"The world economic crisis gave an enormous extension to this failure to utilise the productive forces. In addition to the compulsory idleness of factories, plant, shipping etc, and of tens of millions of workers, this period saw inaugurated for the first time on a gigantic scale by all the leaders of capitalism and main governments of capitalism, wholesale restriction and limitation policies, made possible only by the monopolist basis or by direct state action, and even actual destruction of raw materials and agricultural products, ploughing up of crops, bounties of non-production, dismantling of plant and shipyards, wrecking of spindles, etc." (R. Palme Dutt, *World Politics. 1918-1936*, p.95, London 1936).

In order to stabilise and regulate the competition between rivals, monopoly capital had already resorted to the formation of cartels, but after 1920, these were increasingly used to regulate the sharing of losses. In addition to becoming more numerous, cartels also tended to become *less stable*. From the hundred international monopolist associations mentioned by Lenin in 1916, over three hundred had gained control over every branch of the world economy by 1931. Yet many, such as the steel, oil and rayon cartels, were formed in the 1920s, only to collapse in the 1930s. Cartels became, in effect, declarations of truce in between wars of trade and armed redivision.

As a reflection of the contraction of production throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the figures for world trade, illustrate a trough. (See Figure 4). This was facilitated by the growth of trade tariffs and reached its maximum after 1929, when the US government passed

Thirdly, the socialist countries did not swamp the capitalist economies with 'surplus products', but have generated a growing demand for high technology and raw material imports, as well as *loan capital*, from the imperialist countries. There is nothing wrong with this. But contrary to the picture painted by Stalin, of a socialist system enveloping capitalism with trade, capitalism has managed to envelope some socialist countries, such as Poland and Roumania, in crisis. It is a nonsense to believe that capitalism would passively allow rival *capitalists* to swamp them in 'surplus products', never mind socialist countries. Capitalism has traded with socialism on its own harsh terms, and has been equally able to *block trade*. Stalin's scheme was too simple and one-sided. He did not account for capitalist expansion, and he did not account for the possibility of capitalism injecting crisis into the socialist countries.

To be fair to Stalin however, the world situation in 1952 was still dominated by a tense political crisis, as the Cold War and Korean War reached their climax, and the imperialist post war boom did not become obvious until after his death. But the important point to grasp is that Stalin's definition of the general crisis, as the changing world balance of forces in favour of socialism, and which he extended in *Economic Problems* with the idea of economic competition between two separate markets, was not soundly based in Marxism, but became fertile soil for opportunism. This theory of a continuing general crisis was retained by the leaders of the CPSU after Stalin's death, and after it had become obvious that his scheme of a "deepening general crisis of capitalism" in *Economic Problems* bore no relation to postwar imperialist reality. Let us then look at the ideological roots of centrism in relation to the general crisis of capitalism;

## The Roots of Centrism

It was actually J.V. Stalin who resurrected the phrase 'general crisis of capitalism' and gave it new meaning, in his political report to the 16th Party Congress (1930). It is worth quoting his definition in full:

"The present economic crisis is developing on the basis of the *general crisis of capitalism* which arose already in the period of the imperialist war, sapped the foundations of capitalism and facilitated the advent of the economic crisis.

"What does that mean?"

"It means, first of all, that the imperialist war and its aftermath intensified the decay of capitalism and upset its equilibrium, that we are now living in an epoch of wars and revolutions, that capitalism has already ceased to be the *sole and all-embracing* system of world economy, that parallel with the *capitalist* system of economy there is the *socialist* system, which is growing, thriving, stands opposed to the capitalist system, and by its very existence demonstrates the decaying state of capitalism, shakes its foundations.

"It means, further, that the imperialist war and the victory of the revolution in the USSR have shaken the foundations of imperialism in the *colonial and dependent* countries, that the authority of imperialism has already been undermined in those countries, that it is no longer able to boss those countries in the old way.

"It means, further, that during the war and after it, a young native capitalism appeared and grew up in the colonial and dependent countries, which is successfully competing in the markets with the old capitalist countries, intensifying and complicating the struggle for markets.

"It means lastly, that the war left the majority of capitalist countries a burdensome heritage in the shape of *enterprises chronically working under capacity* and of an *army of unemployed numbering millions*, which has been transformed from a reserve into a *permanent army of unemployed*; this created for capitalism a mass of difficulties even before the present economic crisis, and must complicate matters still more during the crisis." (J. Stalin, *Political Report of the CC to the 16th Congress of the CPSU(B)*, pp.20-22, Moscow 1951).

Already, we can see the ideas in the 'two market theory' taking root. Stalin had used the political characterisation of an "epoch of wars and revolutions"

as a link between Lenin and his own definition of the general crisis, to give it authority. But then he passed on, almost without pause, to his *central theme*, as being the world balance of forces between imperialism and socialism. For Stalin, it was the growth and strengthening of socialism since the October Revolution, the very existence of the Soviet Union, which became the most important feature determining the general crisis of capitalism. Complementary to this of course, was the national liberation struggle waged by "young native capitalism" in Africa and Asia, and the under-utilisation of productive capacity, as processes that weakened imperialism and hindered its ability to compete with the dynamic growth of socialist development. This has consequently provided the reasoning behind the dogma stated at virtually every Soviet Party Congress since the Second World War, and most recently by Leonid Brezhnev at the 26th; "A further aggravation of the general crisis was witnessed during these years." (*Documents and Resolutions of the 26th Soviet Party Congress*, p.26, Moscow 1981).

The common thread running through all the economic and political manifestations of the general crisis since 1914, according to Stalin, was therefore *not* absolute overproduction of capital. He did actually mention overproduction elsewhere in the 16th Party Report, but only in relation to the 1929 slump. Even then, Stalin tended towards underconsumptionism as an explanation, rather than describing the inability of capital to raise the intensity of exploitation, due to its *overproduction in relation to labour*. We therefore do not consider Stalin's understanding of the general crisis to be fully Marxist.

Consequently, as with his 'two world market theory', we find Stalin's definition of the general crisis based on very superficial observations. For example, his cause for all the various aspects of general crisis, was the *First World War*, as if it was not itself an expression of that crisis. He never said what caused the war. Secondly, of all the class contradictions which intensify with the onset of general crisis, he only really mentioned those between imperialism and socialism, and between imperialism and the colonies. But what *really* set the period during and between the two world wars apart from any other, was the conflict between the imperialists themselves, and between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the world capitalist system as a whole. Thirdly, he stated that the levels of unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s had become *permanent*. He considered this to be still operative in 1952, due to the supposed erosion of the world capitalist market by the growth of a separate world socialist market. This idea more than any other, illustrated the shallowness of Stalin's theory.

Stalin's distortion of Marxism was not due to 'bad economics' as such, but emanated from his world view. He considered the building and defence of socialism in the Soviet Union not only a priority for all communists, which we wouldn't disagree with, but was also prepared to sacrifice any consideration, including principles, towards that end. This led to the criminal elimination of Party and socialist democracy during the 1930s, and to conciliationism by the CPSU leadership, with the growth of opportunism in the Communist International (so long as it remained loyal to the defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist intervention). These opportunist developments were strengthened, when the success of Soviet industrialisation stood out in sharp contrast to the tragic and bloody defeat of proletarian revolution at the hands of fascism elsewhere.

It was Hitler's shattering blow to the Communist Party of Germany that sparked this ideological retreat, in the wake of which right opportunism began to fill the



vacuum at the Seventh Congress of Comintern. Stalin did not resist these changes, but used his immense power and influence to endorse the moves by Comintern, to divorce the tasks of world revolution from the proletarian internationalist duty of defending the gains of October. Stalin's centrism reconciled the CPSU to the growth of opportunism in Comintern, but to call this counter-revolutionary, as the Trotskyites crudely maintain, is to ignore his *primary motivation* of strengthening and developing living socialism albeit in a bureaucratically distorted form.

The importance of Stalin's theory of general crisis, is that it was the expression of his centrist world outlook. Although it was Nikita Krushchev, who codified the accommodation between centrism and opportunism at the historic 20th Congress of the CPSU, all the seeds of the new changes had already been planted by Stalin. In fact, it was his theory of the general crisis which provided the basis for the Third Programme of the CPSU, and which thus justified the conciliation with opportunism in a programmatic form.

## The World Balance of Forces

The central tenet of the Third Programme, adopted at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in 1961, is the 'third stage' of general crisis describing a 'new balance' of world forces:

"Imperialism has entered the period of decline and collapse. An inexorable process of decay has seized capitalism from top to bottom — its economic and political system, its politics and ideology. Imperialism has forever lost its power over the bulk of mankind. The main content, main trend and main features of the historical development of mankind are being determined by the world socialist system, by the forces fighting against imperialism, for the socialist reorganisation of society.

"The First World War and the October Revolution ushered in the general crisis of capitalism. The second stage of this crisis developed at the time of the Second World War and the socialist revolutions that took place in a number of European and Asian countries. World capitalism has now entered a new, third stage of that crisis, the principle feature of which is that its development was not connected with a world war." (*The Road to Communism*, p.470, Moscow 1961).

The main idea is that the balance of world forces tilted in favour of socialism during the 1950s, to the extent that the socialist system determined the character of the new epoch. This theory was primarily designed to contain the three "new developments" introduced by Krushchev at the 20th Party Congress. Firstly, he legitimised the parliamentary road "without civil war", being pursued by the British, French, Italian and other communist parties. Soviets as organs of power were formally declared no longer universally applicable. Secondly, to underpin the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism as general, Krushchev stated that wars were no longer inevitable, due to the tilt away from imperialism. He thus gave succour to the spread of pacifist illusions throughout the world communist movement. Thirdly, he maintained that socialism would come to surpass imperialism in all spheres, *primarily by means of peaceful economic competition*.

The appraisal of the world balance of forces in the *Third Programme* is excessively "optimistic" in favour of socialism with no basis in truth. Subsequent events have disproved it time and time again. Here is what it says about the 'disintegration' of the imperialist system:

"Thus, the world imperialist system is rent by deep-rooted and acute contradictions. The antagonisms of labour and capital, the contradictions between the people and the monopolies, growing militarism, the break-up of the colonial system, the contradiction between the imperialist countries, conflicts and contradictions between the young national states and the old colonial powers, and — most important of all — the rapid growth of world socialism, are sapping and destroying

imperialism, leading to its weakening and collapse." (*The Road to Communism* pp.479-80).

We would never argue that capitalism is crisis-free, *but this was written in 1961*, at the height of the postwar boom! Surely, the feature characterising this period, despite the colonial wars, was the re-establishment of a stable political and economic equilibrium for imperialism. The fact that the world imperialist system did not disintegrate, but retained a cohesion between the major imperialist powers to the present day, and that it was the world socialist system which suffered splits, is a reflection of the continuing strength and dominance of imperialism in the world. This is contrary to the view of the *Third Programme*.

Throughout this programme, the idea of revolution in the imperialist countries is either reduced to a formal "phrase" or disappears, because as the quotation above reaffirms, "the rapid growth of world socialism" is the "most important" factor "sapping and destroying imperialism". This has led to the following hollow claim;

"The world socialist system is advancing steadfastly towards decisive victory in its economic competition with capitalism. It will shortly surpass the world capitalist system in aggregate industrial and agricultural production." (*The Road to Communism*, p.469)

It further claimed that the Soviet Union would surpass the United States in production per capita by 1970, and that "the material and technical basis of communism" would be built by the year 1980. The Soviet Union has made magnificent strides in all fields since that prediction was made, yet nobody has any evidence to show that the US has been surpassed, or the basis of communism built. Such unscientific and un-Marxist declarations towards the internal development of the socialist countries have mirrored the world communist movement's retreat from the tasks of world revolution, and "... betrays an insufficient grasp of what is required for communism as an economic-social-historical stage, and is thus un-internationalist." (R. Yürükoğlu, *Living Socialism*, p.82, London 1982).

The *Third Programme* also claims that the world balance in favour of socialism is the *main* factor preventing the further outbreak of world war:

"It is possible to avert a world war by the combined efforts of the mighty socialist camp, the peace-loving non-socialist countries, the international working class and all the forces championing peace. The growing superiority of the socialist forces over the forces of imperialism, of the forces of peace over those of war, will make it actually possible to banish world war from the life of society even before the complete victory of socialism on earth, with capitalism surviving in a part of the world..

"General and complete disarmament under strict international control is a radical way of guaranteeing a durable peace. imperialism has imposed an unprecedented burden of armaments on the peoples. Socialism sees its duty towards mankind in delivering it from this absurd waste of national wealth. The solution of this problem would have historical significance for mankind. By an active and determined effort the peoples can and must force the imperialists into disarmament." (*The Road to Communism*, p.505)

The logical conclusion drawn by centrism, is that pacifist schemes for disarmament promoted by the opportunists in the capitalist countries have become justified. Although we must reject the centrist and opportunist concept of the general crisis of capitalism, we must also recognise that the existence of socialism and its effect on the world balance of forces does form an important factor determining world development. This means that in the conditions that prevail in the world today, the acceptance of pacifism by communist parties in the capitalist countries does not *totally* disarm the working class, but shifts an even greater burden onto that part of the world's working class, which holds state

power. The validity of the centrist world view hinges on living socialism having the power to prevent imperialism from going to war, without revolution in the West. Let us look, therefore at the present economic and military balance between socialism and imperialism, to see if they are right.

## The Present Balance between Imperialism and Socialism

Out of the 150 independent states in the world, eleven make up what is termed the socialist community. These are economically and militarily integrated through CMEA and the Warsaw Pact. Cambodia and Afghanistan are politically and economically dependent upon the socialist community and Yugoslavia, Albania, Democratic Korea and China are defined as socialist countries outside the socialist community. A few other countries, such as Angola, Mozambique, and S. Yemen can be considered as being orientated towards socialism but not yet *decisively* socialist themselves. The number of socialist states, therefore, does not exceed twenty.

The imperialist system consists centrally of between twenty and thirty major economies in N. America, W. Europe, Japan, Australia, S. Africa, Israel and New Zealand. The strength of imperialism over socialism, however, is that it dominates the rest of the capitalist world economically, if not politically.

In terms of population, a third of the world lives under socialism. This impressive figure relies predominantly upon one billion Chinese citizens, but whose government does not consistently contribute to the world balance in favour of socialism. Without them, the socialist system only accounts for about 10% of the total.

The typical fraction of world industrial production quoted by Soviet sources is usually 43% for all socialist economies (33% CMEA) and 50% for developed capitalist economies. (See M. Bunkina. *Socialist Economics Today*. p.6 Moscow 1981). This seems to us to be an overoptimistic estimation. For example, the United Nations gives the following percentages of world gross products for 1975 (See Figure 5). The category for "Centrally Planned Economies" does not specify which countries are included, but does stipulate that China, Vietnam and N. Korea are not included in the "Developing Market" category. Even so, the share of about 20% for centrally planned economies is much lower than the official Soviet claims.

Disparities in estimates are most certainly derived from the non-convertibility of socialist currencies. But moreover certain capitalist countries have grown at faster rates than even the socialist economies during the past decade. This is especially true for Japan, whose Gross National Product of over \$1000 billion is now approaching that of the Soviet Union, as well as the up and coming medium developed capitalist economies of Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. These developments have eroded socialism's share of the world economy.

Let us now compare the two most important powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. United Nations

figures give an estimate of US Gross Domestic Product for 1981 at \$2,924 billion. The closest Soviet equivalent is probably Gross Social Product, which Leonid Brezhnev gave as 1,061 billion Roubles for 1980 at the 26th Party Congress (See *Resolutions and Documents* p.42) This is just over \$1,500 billion at the officials exchange equivalent of 1 Rouble to \$1½. The US economy is thus double the Soviet economy, which is further illustrated by UN 1981 monthly data for electric power generation. (The US figure is 197,352 KWH and the Soviet figure is 110,417 KWH in *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*. UN 1982).

In terms of industrial production, they are possibly equivalent, as Soviet industry accounts for 60% of the economy, whereas it is only 30% for the US. The socialist economies employ less workers and resources in retail, services, administration, banking, and transport etc than the imperialist economies, and therefore still suffer well publicised (in their own press) inefficiencies in these spheres.

The Soviet Union occupies first place in the output of "... oil and steel, cement and chemical fertilisers, wheat and cotton, mainline electric and diesel locomotives". (*Documents and Resolutions of the 26th Party Congress*. p.53). According to UN figures, it also outstrips the US in coal, natural gas, iron ore and non-ferrous ores. Generally, the Soviet Union has been in the forefront of applying advanced automated techniques to branches of heavy industry, such as electric power generation, numerically controlled machine tools and steel rolling.

But in other important high technology industries, the Soviet Union has lagged behind the US, Japan and W. Germany. In 1980-81, the US produced three times the amount of plastic and resins, 4½ times the number of passenger cars and double the number of trucks as the Soviet Union (See *Monthly Bulletin of Stats*. UN 1982). In 1979, out of 188,900 general purpose computers installed in the world, the US had 45.7%, Japan had 21.6%, Britain had 4.4% whereas the Soviet Union only accounted for 4.2% (*Financial Times*. February, 1979).

The US and Japan have gained a massive lead in the development and production of microelectronics, such as microprocessors and 64K RAM memories, both in relation to other capitalist as well as socialist countries. The Soviet Union has an immense gap to close with Japan and the US in the race to robotise industry.

Often, the Soviet Union has preferred to import technology from the imperialist countries, to establish new industries, such as the car plant at Togliattigrad. This has provided the means for imperialism to further obstruct the development of socialism. For instance, the US government prevented Fords and Mack Trucks from providing the Soviet Union with assistance in building the Kamaz Truck plant in 1971. A production capacity of 150,000 per annum was planned as a result, but was further hindered by the US embargo on IBM, preventing supplies of spare parts to the production control computer system, which that company installed (November 10, 1982).

All in all, we can say that the imperialist economies

**Figure 5**  
Share of World Gross Product (percent)

	World	Centrally planned Economies	Developed Market Economies	Developing Market Economies
GDP Total	100	19.6	65.6	14.8
Industrial Activity	100	21.7	63.1	15.2
Agriculture	100	26.3	38.3	35.4
Construction	100	21.5	66.3	12.2
Transport & Communication	100	13.8	72.8	13.4

Source: The UN Yearbook 1979/80.



have retained a lead over the socialist economies, whose added burden has been to overcome a heritage of underdevelopment. The gap is even greater if we consider productivity and production per capita. Here is what a Soviet pamphlet says:

"In productivity, too, the Soviet Union has yet to draw even with a number of capitalist states. In 1979, for instance, the productivity of social labour in the USSR was roughly 40%, and production per employee in industry and agriculture 55% and 20-25%, respectively, of the US level.

"What is the explanation of the fact that American workers and farmers outperform their Soviet opposite numbers by a factor of 2 to 4? The main reason is the higher technological level of US industry and agriculture. Judging by the rates of development of production, however, the time is not far off when this lag of the Soviet Union will be eliminated." (M. Bunkina. *Socialist Economics Today*. p.38).

We fully endorse all advances of the socialist countries, but the historic economic advantage of imperialism in N. America, Japan and W. Europe will not be easily overcome. We consider the most likely, most certain and quickest way for socialism to surpass imperialism in all spheres, is for proletarian revolution to be carried out, *especially* in the imperialist countries themselves.

As capitalism goes into crisis, it may be argued that socialism can take the opportunity to overtake. A decline in capitalist production, however, is not universal to all branches of industry. As Hitler showed after 1933, and as President Reagan is showing today, 'imperialism in crisis' dramatically accelerates the *production of arms*. The balance between socialism and imperialism is tested ultimately not in wheat and cars, but in the threat of war.

By making military preparation a priority in the economy, by channelling the highest grade resources and most skilled manpower into the production of weapons technology, the Soviet Union has overcome the in-built advantages of imperialism. It was shortly after Krushchev made his bombastic claims to socialist supremacy in the world balance, that imperialism called his bluff over the Cuban Missile Crisis. Only then, did the Soviet Union seriously make efforts to gain military parity in strategic nuclear capability. This was roughly achieved in the 1970s and precipitated a positive response by imperialism to the offer of arms limitations negotiations. But this was only a temporary respite before imperialism attempted to re-establish nuclear hegemony.

Let us look at the present military balance, using the imperialist-biased figures of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (*The Military Balance* 1982-1983). Defense expenditure for NATO in 1981 was \$287,183 million and \$212,091 for the Warsaw Pact. NATO armed forces numbered 5,345,600 men, while the Warsaw Pact had 4,819,500. NATO was ahead on both counts according to the IISS.

Strategic nuclear capability is defined as those warheads that can be delivered by the US and Soviet Union to each other. They are carried by three systems; Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and long-range bombers. The Soviet Union has the edge in land-based ICBMs (1,400) as against the US total of 1,050, and launches about 5000 warheads in this manner compared to just over 2,000 US warheads. The US relies more heavily upon its 520 SLBMs which carry 4,770 warheads, as against the 950 Soviet SLBMs which only carry 1,811 warheads. Furthermore, the US has a superior fleet of 375 long-range bombers (one third in the air at any one time) carrying 2,400 warheads as against 150 Soviet bombers with only 300 warheads. In general, the US has more strategic warheads (9,268) as against the Soviet total of 7,300 and has more flexible systems for delivering them. Because the Soviets depend more on

ICBMs, which are fixed targets, the US would probably fare better in receiving a 'first strike' i.e., more of its systems would survive to counter-attack.

The Soviet Union is also threatened by 64 British Polaris, 98 French land and sea-based missiles and 75 Chinese land-based missiles. Although the Soviets have installed SS-20s to counter this, imperialism is set to regain the advantage with the extremely accurate Pershing II and Cruise missiles. The Soviet Union is considered to be 5 years behind in the development of the latter technology.

The US has other advantages in relation to naval power. Firstly, the Soviet navy must operate from ports in the Black Sea, the Baltic, Murmansk and Vladivostok, which are bottled in by imperialist allies of the US. Although the Soviet Union has more submarines than the US, only 10 of its 62 SLBM carrying craft operate within target range at one time, and the US employs extensive systems of underwater sonar arrays, over 300 maritime patrol aircraft, plus 80 killer-hunter submarines to constantly track them. The Soviet Union does not have the facility to do the same to the 32 US ballistic missile submarines, 16 of which are on patrol at any one time. In addition to submarine fleets, the US has two surface fleets in the Pacific, one in the Atlantic, one in the Indian Ocean and one in the Mediterranean, for which *fourteen carriers* provide a 300 mile aircover. If the US fleet had fought the Falklands war, the Argentinian aircraft would not have got off the ground! The Soviet navy, on the other hand, mainly performs a coastal defense role and with only two small Kiev carriers (two more under construction), so it has minimal or no aircover away from the Soviet Union.

The historic background to the arms race between imperialism and socialism since the Second World War, has been one of the US retaining supremacy through the constant development of new technologies, and the Soviet Union striving to catch up. The exception was when the Soviet Union launched the first long-range rocket in 1957, but by the 'sixties, the US had again overtaken it in the installation of ICBMs. The US led the way with nuclear bombers in the 'fifties, SLBMs in the 'sixties, and MIRVed missile systems in the 'seventies. Now it is poised to introduce a whole new range of technologies in the 'eighties with 100 MX missiles (10 warheads each), Trident II, Pershing II, cruise missiles and the neutron artillery shell. Another reflection of the arms race is the space race, which the US clearly won in the 1960s with the Apollo landing on the moon. Now, it has again established a lead with the space shuttle as a cheap and flexible system for launching and destroying military satellites.

The objectives of imperialism and socialism are contradictory and underlie the instability of any arms negotiations and agreements. Imperialism strives to maintain its in-built advantage and military supremacy, to force the Soviet Union to comply with its own expansionism, and to win a world war if necessary. Socialism on the other hand, strives for *parity*, to reduce imperialism's ability to win a war in Europe, and to make it think twice before launching one. It would be nonsense to belittle the Soviet military capability, as it is formidable. But because socialism remains essentially besieged by imperialist encirclement, its ability to extend its nuclear and conventional parity in Europe, to dominance of the world military balance is extremely limited. It is therefore unable to actually *reserve* the arms spiral into a programme of disarmament. Only when the imperialist encirclement of socialism is transformed into a socialist encirclement of imperialism, could disarmament be imposed on the remaining imperialists, and only then, with the threat of a terrible and violent punishment for non-compliance.

Living socialism can only restrain the imperialist

war-drive but cannot prevent it. Similarly, pacifist peace movements have the same effect, but moreover, because they represent a bourgeois ideological dominance over the working masses, they weaken the forces for revolution, as the only certain means of securing a world balance in favour of socialism and peace. Our view, is that the millions who demonstrate for peace must also be won to the revolutionary overthrow of imperialism, otherwise, *world war will become inevitable*.

## The Character of the Present Epoch

To understand the character of an epoch, it is important not to simply look at individual movements, at what is specific, but to look at what is *general*. Above all, it is important to "... know which class stands at the hub of one epoch or another, determining its main content, the main direction of its development..." (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.21, p.145) For Lenin, this understanding was not an end in itself, but provided a guide to the development of political tactics. For instance the Marxist attitude towards the bourgeoisie was determined by whether it was in revolutionary ascendancy against the decrepitude of feudalism, or whether it had itself become reactionary.

The rise of the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class ranged from its genesis during the Renaissance of the 15th century, through to the end of the 19th century. In *specific* instances, various national bourgeoisies have waged a progressive anti-imperialist struggle in the 20th century. But in general, with the development of imperialism, the bourgeoisie became "... a hindrance to the further development of the productive forces. From a rising and progressive class, the bourgeoisie has turned into a declining, decadent, and reactionary class. It is quite another class that is now on the upgrade on a broad historical scale." (Ibid. p.149). Lenin was of course referring to the proletariat in his last sentence.

Every class epoch is therefore characterised by the struggle between the two central classes, one on the upgrade and the other on the downgrade. On top of this, however it is important to assess the balance of power. For instance, feudalism and absolutism were constantly in decline from the 15th century, but it was not until the 18th century, that the bourgeoisie was fully able to overthrow it. The 16th century Dutch and the 17th century English Revolutions were essentially precursors but inconclusive. It was only after the American and French Revolutions in conjunction with the English Industrial Revolution that the back of absolutism was truly broken, and its complete demise merely a matter of time. These three events were decisive in changing the balance of forces in favour of the revolutionary bourgeoisie and transforming it into *the class* determining the character of the epoch (1789-1871).

If we look at the bourgeoisie, since it became imperialist at the beginning of the century, we see that it has now become the declining and reactionary class. Even before the October Revolution, Lenin had drawn the significance of imperialism, as being "... moribund capitalism, capitalism in transition to socialism: monopoly, which grows out of capitalism, is already dying capitalism, the beginning of its transition to socialism." (V.I. Lenin, *CW* Vol.23, p.107) Since writing that passage in 1916, Lenin's position on imperialism, as being the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, has been confirmed by the concrete experience of socialist revolution in even some of the most backward countries. This process has been further facilitated by the extension of monopoly capital from its original base in a mere handful of imperialist countries, to where it is now taking domestic roots in a

considerable number of medium-developed capitalist countries in Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. The economic, social and political maturity of the whole world capitalist system is rapidly ripening for socialism.

Now we turn to the definition of the present epoch, given in the Third Programme of the CPSU:

"Our epoch, whose main content is the transition from capitalism to socialism, is an epoch of struggle between the two opposing social systems, an epoch of socialist and national-liberation revolutions, of the breakdown of imperialism and the abolition of the colonial system, an epoch of the transition of more and more peoples to the socialist path, of the triumph of socialism and communism on a world-wide scale. The central factor of the present epoch is the international working class and its main creation, the world socialist system." (*The Road to Communism*, p.449)

We don't disagree with the characterisation of the epoch as the transition from capitalism to socialism, but the above statement gets carried away with itself. It wants to call the epoch "socialist", but dare not use such open language. Our central disagreement, as we have already illustrated, is with the idea that the proletariat as the 'class on the upgrade' has superseded the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie as the 'class on the downgrade'. This is obviously wrong, as the domination of imperialism is reflected in the economic balance between the two world systems; in the world communist movement; in the growing imperialist war-drive; and consequently, in the impossibility of socialism to develop fully towards communism, while the dictatorship of the proletariat must arm itself against imperialist encirclement and aggression. All of one still dominated by imperialism. In this sense, the present epoch can still be legitimately described as *the imperialist epoch*.

R. Yürükoğlu describes in his book *Living Socialism* the necessary world conditions for the inauguration of the communist epoch:

"Proletarian dictatorships established on one part of the globe cannot be successful on their own, without there taking place a definite tip in the world balance of power, which rises on the foundations of economic superiority, in favour of socialism. Under present day conditions, the most important guarantee of success is for the existing proletarian dictatorships to form a tightly knit, monolithic bloc among themselves and with the working class of other countries. For the established proletarian dictatorships are only *partial victories*. Not until such time as the system of world economic and political relations weighs in favour of the socialist countries and their worldwide allies, will a definite, complete, and not merely partial, result have been achieved. In all probability, this point will be reached, not by the sudden and total collapse of imperialism all at once, but through revolutions in single countries. This is the process of the gradual formation of the *world dictatorship of the proletariat*. The materialisation of the world dictatorship of the proletariat will signify the *final victory of socialism*.

"The *world dictatorship of the proletariat* constitutes the irreversible moment of domination of the existing and newly-founded socialist countries, having triumphed over imperialism in every sphere. For this very reason, the world dictatorship of the proletariat will in general also constitute the *beginning* of the process of self-negation, the withering away of the dictatorship of the proletariat (historically the final form of the state). There can be no talk of the disappearance of the state in any country before such a stage has been reached. On the contrary, until such a stage has been reached, all the workers' states must necessarily strengthen themselves against the global enemy, the bourgeoisie. Herein lies the *external* reason for the existence of the state (the proletarian dictatorship).

"The establishment of the world dictatorship of the proletariat will usher in a new historical era, an era in which capitalism-imperialism will have collapsed as a system, in which the economic source of the threat of war will have been removed, in which the principle "to each according to his needs" can begin to be inscribed on the banners of mankind. The era of transition from capitalism to socialism will draw to a close, and the *era of communism* will begin. (R. Yürükoğlu, *Living Socialism*, pp.86-87)

The turning-point in this process, is the transformation of the imperialist encirclement of socialism into

the socialist encirclement of vestigial imperialism and capitalism, by means of proletarian revolutions. This point has not yet been reached.

### Conclusion

By understanding the character of the present epoch, and the current stage of development towards capitalist crisis, we can evolve tactics appropriate to the situation.

Our understanding of the general crisis of capitalism, is that it does not at present exist. But the conclusion of our economics articles in *The Leninist* Nos. 2 and 3, is that imperialism is sliding towards its second general crisis this century. The significance of this development, is that revolution will again be placed on the agenda for communists in *all* capitalist countries, including centres of imperialism, such as Britain.

In the present situation, where the objective conditions for the outbreak of revolution have not matured in the world capitalist system as a whole, the imperialist nature of the epoch commits us to the ideological struggle in favour of revolution and against opportunism. The completion of the world revolution, moreover, is not only the task for communists in the capitalist countries, but must be recognised by communists in the socialist system as well. Recent events in Poland have shown that living socialism cannot be free from the threat of counter-revolution, until *the decisive shift towards socialism is secured world-wide*.

As in Lenin's day, when opportunism attempted to disguise the character of imperialism and hide its betrayal of revolution, new theories have been developed to justify the renunciation of revolution in the language of distorted Marxism. Whereas before 1917, such theories propounded the possibility of reforming imperialism back into progressive, pre-imperialist capitalism, or of pacifying imperialism with schemes of 'ultra-imperialism', opportunism has now developed the

idea of a 'post-imperialist' or even 'socialist' era, in which imperialism has already collapsed into permanent 'general crisis'. The objective of opportunism in doing this, is still the same as in the past; to befuddle any concrete Marxist analysis of imperialism and to undermine the inevitable conclusion from that analysis i.e. the task of proletarian revolution.

The ideological struggle is an important sphere determining the world balance of forces between the working class and the imperialist bourgeoisie. The grip of opportunism is a measure of imperialist dominance over the working class, and prevents the working class of capitalist countries from consciously realising their own true interests and from contributing to the world balance in favour of socialism.

The role of centrism, on the other hand, is contradictory. It has conciliated with opportunism, in a narrow and conservative attempt to safeguard the existing gains of socialism. But in doing this, it has nurtured the growth of opportunism, and is now suffering from the consequences, as Euro-communism bites the hand that fed it. Without a revolutionary proletarian movement in the imperialist countries, the socialist countries must bear increasing pressures from the imperialist war drive.

Our proletarian internationalist duty must be to defend and strengthen living socialism against imperialism, to build a revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party and to overthrow our own imperialist bourgeoisie. To fulfill this task, requires a concerted offensive to defeat opportunism in our ranks, and as a necessary part of that struggle, we must constantly expose the shortcomings of centrism. We offer *comradely* criticism of the leaders of the socialist countries, in the belief that those comrades are making mistakes, which unless remedied, will have a disastrously negative effect on the security and wellbeing of socialism, as well as the integrity of the world communist movement. □

## ANSWERING THE CALL

In *The Leninist* No.3 we launched *A Call to all Communists*, urging all genuine communists to join the Communist Party of Great Britain. We challenged the New Communist Party, the Workers Party, the Revolutionary Communist Group, *Proletarian*, the John MacLean Collective, and *Straight Left*, to answer the following questions. 1) What is the CPGB? Will you join it? 2) Is organisational unity with elements under the influence of opportunism always incorrect? 3) Is there a world communist movement? 4) What stage are we now in?

These six groups were each offered one thousand words in this edition of *The Leninist* to answer our *Call*. Only two ventured to do so; Royston (Raging) Bull's Workers Party, and the left-centrist publication *Proletarian*. As can be seen, these groups make up for their lack of developed theory, by a combination of rabid phraseology and subjective idealism. Despite this, we are well pleased with the replies, for they have helped, albeit unintentionally, to expose the impotency, the pendency, and the ideological poverty of sectarianism. As such our aim of detaching genuine communists from these groups has taken a step forward.

Although we received assurances from the John MacLean Collective that they would respond nothing was forthcoming, so much for their welcoming "the opportunity to contribute" to *The Leninist*.

In all truth we never expected anything from the New Communist Party or *Straight Left*, since these old stable mates both like to imagine themselves as *the workers' movement*, as *the left*.

To engage in polemic is not only alien, but something that would lead to certain destruction. For out in the open these centrists could not help but expose their political bankruptcy. Only in isolation, with high defensive walls, built with ideological junk accumulated from the past, can collapse be prevented and the loss of militants be kept to a minimum.

The Revolutionary Communist Group seems to have broken off from its flirtation with the world communist movement and now seems intent on chasing Greenham Common ladies instead. These vicarious revolutionaries once regularly carried reports in their paper dealing with the communist movement, they even devoted half a page to review *The Leninist*, but obviously the leadership of this much split organisation feared that some of its membership might take the affair seriously, might even propose marriage. To avoid this, the RCG appears to be sliding back to its petty-bourgeois left origins.

But more important than these groups, is the general effect of the *Call*. The response has been heartening, for many comrades it has provided a perspective for transforming the Party, by breaking from the sterile, concealed, closed forms of inner-Party struggle. Significantly for the future, a good number of revolutionaries at present outside our ranks have been forced to reconsider their attitude towards the Communist Party, some have even decided to join.

If we are to win the Communist Party back to Marxism-Leninism we must turn the present trickle of revolutionaries we recruit into a flood!

This is the only way to defeat the right-opportunists and Euros! □

## Workers Party

A fake 'revolutionary' faction of the British Communist Party is canvassing for new members of this rapidly collapsing reformist joke by challenging the Workers Party (amongst others) to say why it refuses to liquidate its Marxist-Leninist strength into the discredited swamp of a 'parliamentary road to socialism'.

Just as the Communist Party's name is a complete hoax, its academic offshoot quickly demonstrates that its 'Leninist' title is equally fraudulent.

It begins its plug for the clapped-out CP with the most naive, un-Marxist, question-begging assertion that the "CPGB is part of the world communist movement" in the lunatic pretence that such matters are decided by organisational affiliation and not political content. *The Leninist* is welcome to kid itself but real Leninists will not be fooled.

This armchair clique's next boast

betrays even shallower impressionism which has never come anywhere near the spirit of Marxism. "The CP has an organic relationship with the working class, and thus organises a significant section of the vanguard of the class"; this makes it preferable to "a sect which declares itself a party when its membership exceeds the dizzy height of one hundred."

But this makes the Labour Party, which has 40,000% more "organic relationship with the working class" than the CP—FORTY THOUSAND PERCENT more — a better bet by far. What a load of juvenile anti-Leninist drivel.

The 'Leninist' has the right quote on its front cover— 'Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement', — but it obviously hasn't the faintest idea what it means, and has clearly never stopped to consider it.

An analysis of the CPGB, or any group, can only begin with its POLITICS, its theory and practice, not with silly sizzism or purely nominal claims to be 'the communist movement', or to have 'international links' or the ability to organise 'class-conscious workers', or having 'a history that stretches back to the early 1920's (the next meaningless boast) which all beg the question of what is the POLITICAL CONTENT of these features.

Just two questions with amply illustrate, — Poland, and the proletarian dictatorship. Falsely pretending to British workers the supposed (but unstated) benefits of being "part of the world communist movement" is a scandalous, lying FRAUD in the light of the CPGB siding with the CIA — and Vatican — stoked-up counter-revolutionary stunt by Solidarity which almost had the Polish communists by the throat and would have mercilessly butchered

thousands of them if it had succeeded.

And what sickening light-minded idiocy is it that justifies continued support for this rotten anti-communist CPGB swamp by effete verbal feints like "this opportunism has not yet become ripe, has not passed over to the bourgeoisie and become counter-revolutionary like the Labour Party".

What would this irresponsible playing with words have been to all Polish communists who would have been lynched if the UNPRECEDENTED bourgeois propaganda and material support behind Solidarity (in which CP and other fake — 'left' support played such a crucially disruptive part with workers in the west) had achieved the planned counter-revolution?

Not only is the CPGB every bit as counter-revolutionary as the Labour Party in its infamous opportunist crawling behind the Reagan-Thatcher propaganda blitz against the Polish workers state, but *The Leninist* OBJECTIVELY joins them by calling on everyone to rejoice at the CP's "ability to organise class-conscious workers" when what it organises them for, just like the Labour Party is COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

*The Leninist* is soft on this because its OWN position on the workers' state is just as completely middle-class-renegade as the CP's (as graphically, textually demonstrated in a long analysis of their Polish position in Bulletins 137, 138, and 149, — to which their only reply was trivial evasion).

The essence of their anti-Marxist counter-revolutionary position can be summed up in just one of their sentences, however. "Prime responsibility for the emergence of Solidarity lies at the door of

the leadership of the PUWP."

This is utterly wrong, and the most reactionary anti-communism. It is the ESSENCE of the position of the Trotskyite groups whose middle-class anti-communism *The Leninist* claims so to despise.

Marxism is the science of the conflict BETWEEN classes, seeing the ENTIRE political world as the outcome of the CONTRADICTION between the oppressed DOMINANT world forces, in Poland and the modern world in general, between the forces of BOURGEOIS DICTATORSHIP on one side and PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP on the other. This is school-level Lenin.

Self-evidently, Solidarity emerges in Poland because of the continued VAST social, economic and political role of bourgeois forces (Church, peasantry, Catholic intelligentsia) sustained by the UNPRECEDENTED strength of the post-war world capitalist boom and CEASELESS anti-communist subversion campaign and military encirclement directed against the workers' states.

Even the mistakes and centrist retreats from firm Leninist proletarian dictatorship and world revolutionary perspectives, made by East European leaderships which of course ADDED to their problems, are not in the strict Marxist sense their 'own responsibility' but can only properly be understood themselves as the result of imperialist pressure working on bureaucratic conservatism, itself the product of isolation from world revolution.

But to trace the main cause and origin ("prime responsibility") of Solidarity's counter-revolution to the MAIN OPPOSED class force which destroyed it (because of the irreconcilable contradiction between

the two), — the communist leadership of the workers' state, — is imbecility run riot.

It is utter petty-bourgeois ignorance of Marxism-Leninism which puts the CPGB, the Trotskyites and *The Leninist* in the camp of anti-Soviet counter-revolution on the question of Solidarity, — along with Reagan, Thatcher, Heffer, Shirley Williams and Frank Chappell.

The time to stand in defence of the Polish workers state was throughout the height of the screaming international pro-Solidarity hysteria. But to this day, *The Leninist* has not INITIATED a single word in support of the dictatorship of the proletariat or the gains of socialist construction in Poland, and uttered only one embarrassed UNPUBLISHED whimp on the subject in reply to the Bulletin's attack.

The truth is that these middle class dilettantes are EMBARRASSED to defend the achievements of Polish socialism amongst their smart cynical friends in affluent Britain, and even more EMBARRASSED at too much emphasis demanding firm dictatorship of the proletariat. Which is why they are in a middle class party which finally buried all trace and mention of the dictatorship of the proletariat in 1977, wiping it out of existence and out of the reformist programme. In other words, no smashing of the capitalist state EVER in Britain, and no establishment of a workers' state (dictatorship of the proletariat) to replace it. In other words permanent class collaboration on the peaceful parliamentary and never-ending road to socialism, which never gets there. *The Leninist* CPapologists are just another reformist anti-communist sect, only more pretentious.

Royston Bull

## Proletarian

*Proletarian* emerged essentially out of the efforts of a handful of communists who had always regarded both the manner in which the NCP was formed and also the way it has conducted revolutionary propaganda through *The New Worker*, as amateurish and economic. The whole essence, form and development of the NCP centres about the philistine, opportunist approach of its leadership towards conducting the class struggle. This in turn rests upon an elementary but cardinal mistake; the idea that the masses can be won over to the struggle for socialism before the politically conscious vanguard has been won over to Marxism-Leninism and rid of all the petit-bourgeois distortions which inevitably accompany the development of a genuinely revolutionary communist movement. Similarly these communists were also aware that the pro-Soviet alternative remaining in the CPGB suffered from the same kind of economist approach in that they restricted the inner-party struggle to, as you crudely define it, pub-room

conspiracies, lacking both the knowledge and the understanding of its crucial importance, which would enable them to conduct the theoretical struggle whilst at the same time dragging the CPGB out of its inactive, opportunist torpor.

The analysis presented in *Proletarian* consequently articulates the main defects of the British communist movement in their highest, most scientific form: i.e. the failure of the British communist movement to grasp Lenin's first main contribution to Marxism concerning the relation between the conscious and spontaneous elements of the class struggle and his corresponding views concerning the tasks of the revolutionary paper (to raise the level of politically advanced workers) and the organisation of revolutionaries.

Your depiction of *Proletarian* as "sectarian", having to be "won over to the CPGB" can only therefore be interpreted as a deliberate misrepresentation. The whole of our position rests precisely on the understanding that we must address

ourselves first and foremost to those strata of the working class who possess socialist political consciousness (at both the advanced and average levels of understanding as defined by Lenin). Our position is founded on the clear, unambiguous principles of scientific socialism concerning this question.

In contrast, the petit-bourgeois foundation of *The Leninist* rests as we have said on the reactionary, eclectic abstraction that the CPSU is centrist. Inevitably, however, the eclectic, sophist methods employed by *The Leninist* also manifest themselves in an opportunist, pragmatic approach to the class struggle. Thus the incantations of *The Leninist* concerning the world communist movement being the "politically organised working class" rest on purely pragmatic, opportunist considerations, not the principles of scientific socialism — in fact *The Leninist* rejects these principles in favour of its own idiosyncratic inventions. An examination of the genesis of *The Leninist* along with their pronouncements concern-



ing the CPGB will serve to illustrate how hollow, empty and devoid of science their incantations concerning the "politically organised working class" really are.

*The Leninist* emerged essentially out of the efforts of a group of individuals, who, commanding the uppermost positions in the central and political committees of the NCP, came under the influence of Yurukoglu, the leader of the so-called "Leninist" expelled faction of the Turkish Communist Party. Presumably in the belief that the ideas of Yurukoglu explained what evidently to them was the incomprehensibly backward character of the British communist movement, this group of individuals thus exchanged their own superficially pro-Soviet views for the equally superficial, but also thoroughly reactionary, anti-Soviet views of Yurukoglu and his trend. This state of affairs resulted in their rapid, prompt and effortless expulsion from the uppermost commanding positions of the NCP in 1980.

As pointed out above the essence of the views of this group revolves about the notion that the CPSU is centrist. The eclectic, sophist logical basis for their use of the term centrism is also manifest in their opportunist overtures towards what they see as "the politically organised working class", i.e. the world communist movement.

Thus in *The Leninist* No 3 amidst the eclectic muddle presented concerning theoretical problems within the CPGB we find the editors delivering a side-swipe at Lenin's concept of politically advanced workers (presented in *Proletarian*) on the basis of a thoroughly garbled argument concerning the causes of petit-bourgeois opportunism in the CPGB as related to their own idiosyncratic notion of what

class the white-collar strata belong to. Thus we find them pontificating on the...

"... vital question of workers overcoming their sectional interests. This can never come about by calling on the working class as a whole to unite around some sectionally defined 'advanced workers', only through the leadership of a vanguard party can the class come to realise itself fully as a class. The struggle for unity must be the struggle for the hegemony of the vanguard over the class." (*The Leninist*, No.3, p.3)

Concerning such proclamations, let us simply point out two major, cardinal errors upon which their whole disquisition rests.

Firstly, their class analysis is based on a concept of the middle strata which is not Lenin's, but their own. They define the middle strata as "office and professional workers" (*The Leninist* No.3, p.3) V.I. Lenin however, defined the middle strata engendered by monopoly capital as the entrepreneurs of the...

"... small workshops scattered all over the country to meet the requirements of big industries such as the bicycle and automobile industries etc.) (V.I. Lenin, *CW*, Vol.15, p.39)

For a class analysis of the white-collar strata, we refer the reader to Soviet works on this question — which, needless to say, do not flout Lenin's ideas.

Secondly, as regards the uncertainty and hesitation expressed by *The Leninist* about calling on the working class to unite around the advanced workers, we reply that only petit-bourgeois opportunists could vacillate when faced with the need to unite the workers around *their own leaders*, the most politically advanced, cultivated representatives of their class.

As regards the rest of the sloppy, scatterbrained muddle *The Leninist* presents concerning the vanguard, hegemony,

sectional interests and the struggle against opportunism, we merely point out that it is not our task to sort it out, and leave them to ponder the following words by Lenin:

"Social Democracy (communism) has everywhere and always been, and *cannot but be* the representative of the class-conscious, and not of the non-class-conscious workers." (V.I. Lenin, his emphasis, *CW*, Vol.4, p.291)

Let us now answer the four questions posed in *The Leninist* No 3.

1. (What is the Communist Party of Great Britain? Will you join it? — *The Leninist*) The CPGB is the organisation embracing by far the bulk of all workers in this country who possess (advanced and average) socialist political consciousness.

*Proletarian* is directed ultimately at arming these workers with Marxism-Leninism in order to conduct the inner-party struggle against opportunism and break with it.

2. (Is organisational unity with elements under the influence of opportunism always incorrect? — *The Leninist*) Obviously no. However, *The Leninist* conveniently overlooks the fact that the CPGB is organised on *Democratic Centralist* lines — the principles of which today prevent the formation of publications not under Central Committee control.

3. (Is there a world communist movement? Who is in it — *The Leninist*) Yes. The great majority of the 120 communist and workers parties who sent delegations to the 26th CPSU Congress. Nobody who adopts anti-Soviet ideas such as the CPSU being "centrist" is part of this movement.

4. (What stage are we in now? — *The Leninist*) The task confronting the British Communist movement is, as argued in *Proletarian* No 1, to build a paper to raise the level of politically advanced workers.

## HOW LENINISTS SHOULD WORK IN THE PARTY

It is because we have won a significant number of new militants to recognise the ideological leadership of our journal that we feel it necessary to deal with the question of 'how Leninists should work in the Party'.

The following seven points, are we hope, a useful guide.

1. Leninists must become the best Party members, taking the lead in all work. We adhere to democratic centralism and unity in action — this is in line with open ideological struggle. So when selling the *Star*, attending meetings of the labour movement, the Party branch or District, and especially at public meetings, Leninist views should be advanced.

2. Every effort should be made to encourage Party meetings to discuss in a serious fashion central questions confronting our movement. The nature of the Labour Party; Women and Feminism; Communists and the Polish crisis; the economic crisis of capitalism and the emerging general crisis; the danger of liquidationism in the Party; Ireland and the duty of communists to support the national liberation struggle.

3. Through becoming recognised as the best Party members, leading principled informal and formal discussions, by openly raising ideological questions, Leninists will draw around them not only the best elements in the Party, but also win large numbers of revolutionaries to join the ranks of our Party.

4. The greatest weapon in winning revolutionaries to the Party is *The Leninist*; it is therefore vital to ensure that it has wide circulation and that money is raised to finance it.

5. Party membership must be carefully guarded. No illusions should be entertained about the self-proclaimed 'tolerance' of the right opportunist and Euro-communist leadership. They do not abide by democratic centralism, but are committed to bureaucratic centralism. This leads to the exclusion of Leninists and even centrists from Party journals. Instead, vicars, Chief Constables, pacifists, social democrats, media personalities and feminists are given full range to express their reactionary garbage.

6. In order to advance their ideological understanding, Leninists will organise serious discussions among themselves.

7. In order to save the Party, we must win large numbers of recruits. But another central question is the building of a healthy pro-Party trend; Leninists have an important role in this. For although there are pro-Party centrists, these elements are at present amorphous. They need to be drawn to the recognition of the need for a concerted offensive against liquidationism. We must also ensure that genuine communists are detached from the liquidationist *Straight Left*. □

# Reviews

## Revolution in Turkey

Berch Berberoğlu, *Turkey in Crisis*, Zed, London 1982, hdk. pp.149, £11.95

### Introduction

The events and prospects of the revolution in Turkey have become the subject of important debate in the communist movement, both of that country and internationally. The differences revolve around fundamental questions of the course and tasks of the revolution, reflecting the different perspectives held by the revolutionary and opportunist currents in our movement.

Last year the *Morning Star* carried a review of Berch Berberoğlu's *Turkey in Crisis* by comrade Chris Myant. Unfortunately either as a result of lack of accurate information, or perhaps for less 'worthy' reasons, he suggested that Berberoğlu's view that there is still a revolutionary situation and that the task of the day is social revolution, is "parallel to that of the *Workers Voice* group" (August 19 1982). To clear up this question and to give communists in Britain an insight to the situation faced by our comrades in Turkey we approached *İşçinin Sesi* (*Workers Voice*). We can see from the review by comrade Ayla Antepli that Myant's contention is utterly erroneous, that the view of *İşçinin Sesi* is that the revolutionary situation has been temporarily suppressed through the imposition of fascism.

Communists in Britain must take heed of and learn from the events in Turkey. Its revolution is certainly a precursor to the emergence of generalised revolutionary situations that will be ushered in with the coming general crisis. The revolution in Turkey gives us a glimpse of our future, just as the 1905 Revolution in Russia did for the last general crisis which erupted nine years later in 1914.

J.M.

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Ayla Antepli

The recently published book by Berch Berberoğlu, *Turkey in Crisis: From State Capitalism to Neo-Colonialism*,

is very welcome for its serious and informative study of the political economy of Turkey, for its forthright presentation of many aspects of capitalist development in Turkey which have heretofore been obscured, and not least of all for the militant and revolutionary spirit which Mr. Berberoğlu brings to the subject and leads him to conclude that "only through socialism can imperialism be expelled and capitalism abolished".

One of the strongest points of the book is Mr. Berberoğlu's correct evaluation of the factors which led to the emergence of a revolutionary situation in Turkey and likewise to the fascist coup of 12 September 1980. In this he follows the analysis that was put forward by *İşçinin Sesi* (*Workers Voice*), in particular in the book *Turkey — Weak Link of Imperialism* by R. Yürükoğlu. For example, he refers to Yürükoğlu's analysis of the high rate of exploitation of the working class of Turkey (super-exploitation) forcing workers down to a level far below the level of subsistence; the views first put forward in *Weak Link* that the workers' struggle in Turkey began to assume an increasingly political character, and that this led to the birth of a revolutionary situation in the country. This in turn brought about a counter-revolutionary reaction in the form of fascism. Here too Berberoğlu agrees with an idea advanced by Yürükoğlu in 1978 which has gained added significance today: the idea that "fascism in Turkey is not restricted to the NAP" but that, along with martial law, it was used as a striking force to prepare the ground for the present open fascist dictatorship (p.119). The opportunists in the TKP, for example, are still arguing that fascism in Turkey is represented not by the junta, but by the NAP!

On all of these important questions of the revolutionary struggle in Turkey, Berberoğlu agrees with views of *İşçinin Sesi*. However, at the same time, it must be pointed out that, he has taken them out of their proper context, the only context in which they have meaning and inner consistency and has placed them into an entirely different context which in fact contradicts and undermines these views.

The concepts of the exploitation and super-exploitation of the working class, of the sharp class struggle and revolutionary situation and of the emergence of fascism in Turkey as the bourgeoisie's "way out" of the revolutionary situation, have meaning and consistency only when they are seen as the result of the rapid development of capitalism in Turkey over the past three decades, a development which resulted in the emergence of finance-capital and state monopoly capita-

lism, as well as the intense striving of the bourgeoisie to expand abroad.

Instead of this, Berberoğlu has attempted to integrate the correct concepts of the revolutionary situation and fascism into an entirely different and incorrect context: the theory of "neo-colonialism". In this theory the place of finance-capital striving to become imperialist itself is taken by the comprador bourgeoisie directly subordinate to foreign monopolies and imperialism.

This theoretical error leads Berberoğlu to make serious mistakes on at least two points which are of vital practical significance for the revolutionary struggle in Turkey today.

Firstly, he overemphasizes the anti-imperialist and revolutionary aspect of the Kemalist movement and the progressive aspect of the Kemalist state positing a "bitter struggle" between it on the one hand and the compradors and landlords collaborating with imperialism on the other, and accepting, for instance, the view that the Kemalist state was genuinely interested in helping the peasants against the landlords (p.55).

The dangers of such an over-estimation of the progressive aspects of Kemalism were pointed out at length in the "Resolution on the Struggle against Bourgeois Ideology" adopted at the Second Conference of the Leninists of the TKP and we shall not repeat them here except to say that, objectively, it aids the fascist dictatorship which is using the ideology of Kemalism and adapting it to its own purposes.

Secondly, Berberoğlu advances the view that the revolutionary situation is continuing under the fascist dictatorship. But the concept of the revolutionary situation includes a high level of activity of the working class and it must be admitted that, although resentment and anger against the junta is accumulating and bursting out here and there, in general the activity of the masses has been suppressed. The view of *İşçinin Sesi* is that fascism has succeeded in temporarily suppressing the revolutionary situation, but that a crisis which can only be solved by revolution persists.

It is a striking characteristic of the book that it includes side by side both correct revolutionary ideas and the serious mistakes we have pointed out above. The reason it is able to do so and still retain the revolutionary spirit we mentioned at the beginning is that the book was written at quite a distance from the actual struggle and that the author himself is not directly involved in the practical political struggle. Thus the contradiction which runs throughout his book is not brought to a head in the way it otherwise would be. □

## Poland: after the brink

Igor Medvedev, Yevgeni Alexandrov, Alexander Bondar, Yevgeni Chernov, Alexander Chibisov, Viktor Nesterovich, **Who Pushed Poland to the Brink**, Novosti, Moscow, 1982, pbk. pp.80

Enrico Berlinguer, **After Poland**, Spokesman, Nottingham, 1982, pbk. pp.114, £2.25.

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Roger Freeman

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Agreeing with our position that *prime responsibility* for the crisis in Poland lies with the PUWP, *Who Pushed Poland* states that: "The events of 1980-1981 in Poland were triggered off... by a departure from socialist principles and laws". The mistakes of the PUWP were "seized on by socialism's class enemies." (pp.76,77)

But in an attempt to parry demands for far-reaching reforms, guilt for the mistakes is placed almost wholly at the feet of ex-General Secretary of the PUWP Gierek. Although it is undoubtedly true that Gierek "set an example of exploiting one's official position" (p.32), it is a great error to suggest that only one man and his close associates lie at the root of the mistakes. Equally erroneous is the explanation offered as to why in the face of mistakes, the majority of the working class in Poland, thirty-five years after the victory of socialism, joined the unquestionably reactionary Solidarity. We are told that it was because, "the foes of socialism" resorted to "outright lies and equivocations and played on people's ignorance and prejudices" (p.10).

Of course, imperialist agents resort to telling lies, playing on ignorance, and much much more, how do we expect them to behave, especially when socialist countries have problems?

It is by reducing the Polish crisis down to little more than imperialist intrigues and past leaders of the PUWP, that *Who Pushed Poland* is able to take a position of uncritical support for the Military Council for National Salvation. The only task posed for the Military Council is "normalisation", which is in reality nothing but a euphemism for a return to the past. Unless this course is changed there is a great danger of

merely laying the ground for a new crisis and a repetition of the counter-revolutionary danger.

The declaration of martial law by comrade Jaruzelski and the rule of the country by the Military Council might have been the only way out of the crisis that the PUWP leadership could envisage, short of a Soviet intervention; but the question we must ask is whether a Leninist leadership would have landed the country in such a mess that counter-revolution became a danger? No number of statistics about the economic and social achievements of socialism in Poland must be allowed to obscure this question. We must also squarely confront the question of whether the course being pursued by comrade Jaruzelski today represents a genuine break from past undemocratic and bureaucratic methods of solving problems or merely a continuation?

For although *Who Pushed Poland* castigates the old leadership of the PUWP for violating principles, not encouraging the development of "socialist democracy", allowing "bureaucracy" to flourish, and playing "no heed to the voice of the masses" (pp.33, 34), what can we say about the present leadership that is any different? For although counter-revolution was set back by the army intervention and seizure of power, the potential for a new counter-revolutionary upsurge remains just below the surface.

The deep sense of alienation felt by the mass of the working class can only be increased by the privatisation policies, the massive growth of unemployment, the burgeoning black market, and the dramatic decline in living standards. And what can we say about the banning of all trade unions, not only Solidarity, but also the communist led industrial unions, without the slightest consultation with the workers, or even proper discussion on the PUWP Central Committee? Surely it is an example of the bureaucratic centrism epitomised by the Gierek leadership. The living proof of the workers' reaction to this continuation of the past, their cynicism and even open hostility to the military takeover, can be seen from the fact that the new, local level only, unions have only managed to recruit a mere 10% of the workforce.

The best elements in the PUWP, organised in the popular *Reality* clubs (loosely associated with the left-centrist daily paper *Reality* or *Rzeczywistosc* in Polish) called for the crushing of counter-revolution, not attacks on working class rights and living standards. "It is better to use the full force of the law against counter-revolutionaries than to reach

for force against workers" (*Financial Times*, October 29, 1982).

The fact that the discussion clubs around *Reality* have been ordered to stop meeting, and the posting of comrade Tadeusz Grabski, chairman of the national federation of the clubs, to the GDR as a trade councillor, can only be a result of fear of those elements most closely linked with the advanced workers coming to challenge the present leadership.

*After Poland* is a collection of articles and documents produced by the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) in the light of the Polish events. *After Poland* pinpoints many of the underlying negative features of socialism in Poland, rightly declaring that "democracy and socialism must be united" (p.100). And equally correct is their criticism of "official Marxism" which has been reduced to an "ossified and quasi-metaphysical... doctrine" (p.37).

If the criticisms contained in *After Poland* generate debate in the world communist movement this would be positive. But this said, we must express our great concern for the fate of the PCI. For although they ask many important and searching questions about the crisis in Poland; the conclusions contained in *After Poland* pull the party yet one step further down the revisionist road, which eventually leads to workers' parties being transformed into bourgeois workers' parties, along the lines of social-democracy.

This truth is recognised by the faded lefty Eric Heffer, in his introduction. Purring with barely concealed satisfaction, he declares that the documents contained in *After Poland* "takes the Italian Communists further than any other Communist Party.. in its criticism and analysis of the so-called socialism existing in Eastern European countries." (p.7)

Heffer also maintains that the positions of the PCI returns them to "the Marxian concepts of the pre-1914 Second International" (p.7). For him this is a compliment, but for us it is a warning which should sound alarm bells ringing throughout the world communist movement, particularly in the ranks of the communists in Italy.

Comrade Berlinguer's "Third Way" outlined in *After Poland* has nothing to do with learning from the mistakes of comrades in the socialist countries, it is a cover for conciliation with one's 'own' bourgeoisie. His criticisms of the PUWP are determined by his wish for the PCI to become an acceptable party of government. This is what motivates Berlinguer; he has no feelings of proletarian internationalism about problems in Poland or any other socialist country. □

## Books Received

**Emine Engin**, *The Revolution in Afghanistan*, İşçinin Sesi Publications, 1982, pbk. pp.174, £2.00

**Han Suyin**, *Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese Revolution*, Vol.1, 2, 3. Panther. St. Albans 1976, pbk. pp.400 301 476, £1.25, £1.75, £1.75

**Alan Freeman**, *The Benn Heresy*, Pluto Press, London 1982, pbk. pp.187, £3.50

**Tony Benn**, (Edited by Chris Mullin) *Arguments for Democracy*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981, pbk. pp.257, £1.75

**Communist Party of South Africa**, *The African Communist* No.91, Inkululeko Publications, Fourth Quarter, 1982, pbk. pp.111

**Frank Ackerman**, *Reagonomics, Rhetoric vs Reality*, Pluto Press, London 1982, pbk. pp.166, £3.95

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## The Leninist

ments in every country in the world". This is the 'plague on both your houses' position of END which has become established within the right of our Party. It is indisputably anti-Soviet as it does not distinguish between the fundamentally revisionist war-drive of imperialism and the efforts of the Soviet Union to protect itself. But Composite 7 does mention this distinction which we welcomed. Unfortunately it contains no mention of the link between peace and socialist revolution. In fact the centrist comrade Gary Leffley did not even bother to mention the prospect of socialism but unashamedly said that "a non-aligned Britain could prove the decisive factor in the balance of world forces in favour of socialism and national liberation". Non-aligned mark you! But the really ridiculous thing was that *both* these resolutions were passed despite being in part, contradictory!

But the key issues, those which raised the heat of the Congress from torpor to tepidity, were those on election strategy and the crisis in the party.

The *Straight Leftist* resolution on electoral work — Composite 4 — contained two basic flaws. Firstly the proposal for "Focusing on areas where a basis had been laid through sustained Communist work in *alliance with others* as a vanguard party" (our emphasis). Just what does this mean? What *others*? Presumably "others" refers to the Labour Party, so why was not this clearly stated? The second proposal — "Ensuring that the choice of

constituency positively enhances working class unity" reveals that what is really meant is subordination to the Labour Party. The contributions to the debate revealed still more. Comrade Jeff Sawtell, a centrist, while pointing out the danger of what he termed "left liquidationism" (i.e. *Straight Left's* liquidationism) then proceeded to describe the Labour Party as "the mass party of the working class". But that erroneous definition is precisely the basis on which the liquidationists base their position of not standing candidates against Labour (as *The Leninist* has pointed out). Following that, another centrist, comrade Will Gee incorrectly asserted that Composite 4 coincided with Lenin's position on communists' relation to Labour. Fortunately the pro-party comrade John Rees was considerably better informed as to Lenin's position, saying that communists should stand on principle, that this gives us an opportunity to get "close to the class", to expose the betrayals of the social-democrats and because we can't lead from behind. Composite 4 was lost by 89 votes to 121 (perhaps a few right-opportunists voted for it as well as most centrists).

The last debate worth nothing was that on the Party. It started by comrade Tom Durkin reminding the Congress of the leading role of a communist party and he went on to suggest some reasons for our Party's decline; failure to develop Marxist education and theory; economism; and the failure to orientate ourselves to the working class and labour movement

sufficiently. We quite agree. But we do take issue with the comrade when he says that conflicts between (and presumably within) socialist countries and differences in the world communist movement do not effect the Party. Is not Euro-communism an international phenomenon? And has the Polish crisis no effect on our class? In our opinion it has, there are many questions of this nature which *must* be faced if we are to go forward. The next contributor to the debate, noted *Straight Left* centrist Fergus Nicholson, delivered his usual lack-lustre speech. He told delegates that the two most important questions facing the working class were "the crisis of capitalism" and ... "the destruction of the gains of the 1945 government"! Also he emphasised the need for a Party for the working class, containing more young workers, a Party trained and well educated in Marxism-Leninism. Yes we do need all this but where is the development of theory and therefore the concerted ideological attack on Euro-communism and right-opportunism coming from? From our experience, not from the likes of comrade Nicholson.

In our view only *The Leninist* is producing the required development and application of Marxism-Leninism which can defeat all opportunist influences in our party, and weld it into a mighty force capable of leading the revolution.

***The Leninist supporters***  
**London District Congress**

## Hackney Conference

Significantly the party in this area has polarised to the point where there exists now no middle ground between the two camps — the Euro-communists and those on the left. The Conference showed that both camps have become increasingly irreconcilable, with violence just below the surface. The disappearance of the middle ground is a result of the growing strength of the Euro-communists and the near extinction of the right opportunists.

The major issue of contention was an attempt by the left to insert the word 'Leninism' after Marxism in the draft document on party education. The debate revealed the Euro-communists' anti-Marxism and their future intentions. Opposing the amendment, the Euros claimed that the term Marxist-Leninist was "doctrinal" and "sectarian". Local Euro-communist Ken Spours claimed that the term was merely a creation of Stalin and another Euro speaker argued that the deletion of Leninism was a break with the "Stalinist tradition of our party". One suggested that what was required was a party of the "80s not a left-over from the 20s and 30s". The Euro-communists proudly raised the banner of anti-Leninism and decisively defeated the left's amendment. The Euro-communists could quite likely raise this

question at our next national Congress in an effort to change party rules. If they are successful it would be a step towards the liquidation of the party.

The Euro-communists' intolerance was illustrated in the election of the new borough committee; of the 25 on the recommended list only 5 were on the left, and moreover when it came to the vote, one of them lost to a Euro-communist. Even comrade Monty Goldman, a leading local communist of many years standing, and a member of London District Committee, was barred from the recommended list, and therefore failed to get elected. The Euro-communists alleged that his politics were disruptive and wasted time. So much for the Euro-communists' claim to want more debate and democracy in the party. The only debate they want to have is with, persona grata social-democrats, debate amongst communists is to be stamped out.

The left section in the Borough remains ideologically incoherent.

They were unable to halt the Euro-communists' drive, and only controlled a third of the delegates and four branches, compared with their majority not so many years ago. Some of the left even voted for a feminist motion, being unable to grasp it's liquidationist position, i.e. calling for

"women to organise autonomously within the party".

The confusion was even more noticeable when supporters of the liquidationist publication *Straight Left* moved a motion calling for the end of contesting elections and instead affiliation to the Labour Party. The main local propagator, Comrade Pat Turnbull described the Labour Party as the "mass organisation of the working class", maintaining that we should only contest elections through the Labour Party, that is after we've been permitted to affiliate! Significantly some of the left abstained on this motion, while better still some voted against.

The supporters of *Straight Left* are in reality unable to fight the Euro-communists, as both tendencies in one way or the other, are mesmerised by the Labour Party and tail it.

The task of rebuilding the Communist Party as the vanguard party of the working class can only be conducted by genuine communists.

**Smash Euro-communism!**  
**Oppose all forms of liquidationism!**  
**Long live Leninism!**

***The Leninist supporters***  
**Hackney Borough Conference**



# YCL Congress

**It is the task of the Youth League to organise its practical activities in such a way that, by learning, organising, uniting and fighting, its membership shall train both themselves and all those who look to it for leadership; it should train Communists.**

*Tasks of the Youth Leagues (Oct. 2nd 1920)*

**V.I. Lenin**

While our Party proceeds apace in its headlong rush towards liquidation, its Youth organisation, the Young Communist League, has already practically ceased to exist. Anyone who doubts the ultimately destructive nature of the Party's rampant opportunism should look to the YCL to see a terrible portent of the state of the Party in a few years time.

The official membership for 1982 was a horrific 723 with over a quarter of that figure (213) concentrated in the traditionally strong area of Scotland. Wales, however, one of the other traditional bases of revolutionary politics in Britain, had no functioning branches at all and only around 30 members! The official record figure for this year stands at just over 500, and the official mood seems to be that this is a 'ceiling' figure, and that any further growth must come from new recruits! Activists throughout the country probably amount to no more than 200. Indeed, in considering either of these two official membership figures, it is important to remember that few are actually first generation communists — the majority of League activists are young people who have been introduced to communist politics through their families. This is not merely an 'interesting' statistic, but rather a damning indictment of our ability to attract and train 'raw' activists.

The recent 34th National Congress of the YCL presents us with a chance to examine the various groupings and tendencies in the YCL, including those forces dragging us towards liquidation and those who are recoiling from this horrific perspective.

The most glaringly obvious fact before us is that the petty-bourgeois Euro-communist/feminist trend which has dominated the League over the recent period, has factionalised. Ironically the very fact that this grouping gained ascendancy within the YCL made their splintering and decline inevitable, as many members have been alienated by the seemingly inevitable drift towards total organisational liquidation. There was for example, a Euro-communist Branch resolution questioning the wisdom of "identifying as a 'Communist'" anymore. This of course is perfectly logical. When you have surrendered your politics on women to bourgeois feminism, on peace to social-pacifism and have reduced the question of revolution to the task of building a "broad-democratic youth movement" in which Communists will play a 'unifying' not a leading role, why on earth carry on with

the facade of calling yourself a 'communist'?

The majority of delegates reacted strongly against this and other examples of our degeneration — but just how significant for the left was the Congress?

Many comrades spoke of a 'victory' for the left at the Congress. In reality, what the Congress represented was an instinctual rejection of the liquidationism and excesses of the petty bourgeois Euros. Comrades previously adhering to a right-opportunist position, drawn in the wake of Euro-communist dynamism, shifted to a form of right-centrism, as such something we consider positive and healthy, something we Leninists fought to encourage.

The votes for the new General Council are possibly the best broad delineator of the balance of forces within the League. For instance, out of the 98 votes cast, the highest number received was for comrade Kenny Coyle from Scotland — 55. This figure must broadly represent the forces on the left side of our organisation. Similarly, the 39 votes received by Comrades Nicky Bown and Veronica Ralph could be seen as representing the range on the right of the League, from the Euro-Communist trend to simply hard-line feminist. Within both these figures, however, there is necessarily a 'hard-core' and a 'softer fringe'.

Within the left it is possible to isolate a 'hard-core' centrist element of around 20-25. The Polish debate was extremely interesting. The resolution from West London essentially calling for a straight Euro/opportunist perspective of "socialist renewal" involving Solidarity, the Party and the Catholic Church, was carried convincingly with around 70% voting for it. What this vote represented was the isolation of the hard-core centrist block from the softer fringe, who were inevitably more wary of supporting martial law and 'comrade Jaruzelski'. They might even fear upsetting the Party too much and may well regard Poland as a dead issue — a lost battle. Thus, the hard core left were represented by around 20-25 delegates. The vote on Afghanistan also bears out this formula. The Merseyside YCL's amendment to the GC's peace resolution, calling for the deletion of any mention of Afghanistan from the text, was a fairly innocuous manoeuvre by the left which would have raised little alarm amongst the right-centrists. Thus the vote was much closer with the Merseyside amendment splitting the congress roughly 50-50. What these floating 20-30 votes represented was, broadly, right-centrism. They are

recoiling from the prospect of liquidation, but still don't represent in reality, a consistent pro-Party or pro-League force.

An indication of the shift to the left was around the women's question. The composite resolution from West London and Hackney on the subject was the usual shrill and pompous feminist approach that has dominated the YCL in recent years, but the opposing composite of Edinburgh, Tower Hamlets and Glasgow West, while we would disagree with minor aspects of it, did represent a clear consistent and revolutionary break with opportunism on the women's question and it was resoundingly passed by Congress. However, the fact that around 80% of the Congress voted for a revolutionary position on women is not as healthy as it first appears. The right-centrists united with the hard-core centrists to isolate the Euro-Communist trend — but the question must be asked, just how clear on the women's question were many who voted for the left composite? For instance, a comrade from Paisley questioned whether "Gay Lib" and by implication, (for he had linked them earlier in his speech) "Women's Lib" were "central to class politics" and we must question comrades who vote against opportunism not out of a clear revolutionary understanding of the tasks of revolutionaries amongst women, but out of a gut reaction to the liquidation of Euro-style feminism and possibly even out of chauvinism.

All the centrist forces in opposition to the decline of the YCL are fundamentally flawed. Instead of principled debate, their weapons are conspiracy, isolationism and personalised attack. The pre-congress discussion documents revealed the bankruptcy of centrism. Very few sections of the left actually bothered to contribute and the narrowness and conservatism of their 'pro-Sovietism' is incapable of presenting a consistent revolutionary position.

While they remain tied to their unscientific Labour Party orientated politics they are, ultimately, just as anti-League as the opportunists, as their politics do not in reality justify a separate organisation. Their vacillatory position was summed up in the Manchester YCL's amendment to the GC's resolution on Peace, where Congress was urged to condemn not just Soviet, but "all foreign intervention". This sort of diplomatic irrelevance is posed as 'pro-Sovietism'; but by its refusal to take a clear consistent side on the Afghan question, ultimately it only serves the interests of reaction. No amount of support for "Comrade Karmal" can hide this

sort of crass opportunism.

The Youth of Britain cannot be won to revolutionary politics by the hopeless reformism of the YCL, nor by the narrow 'sect' mentality of centrist 'hardline' branches such as Camden with their liquidated liquidationist *Camden Scanner*. The Leninist position must be to defeat revisionism through open, thorough, and principled debate, in parallel with the open struggle initiated within the Party itself. Struggle is not an end in itself, our object must be to forge, through struggle, a mass revolutionary YCL. The centrists are incapable of this task as they are potentially just as anti-League as the Euro-communists. Their 'independent' publications are the standard turgid 'broad-left' fare of *Straight Left* and its pygmy protege, *Camden Scanner*. The centrist opposition must break decisively from their blinkered, unscientific Labour Party — orientated politics if they are to play a positive part in the coming struggle. Only from a position of consis-

tent Leninism, with a materialist analysis of what the Labour Party *really* represents, can we even begin to challenge capitalism. The Leninists are in reality the only consistent and revolutionary pro-YCL force.

Capitalism, with its anarchic and contradictory mode of production, is lurching inevitably towards a generalised crisis which will see the politicisation of millions of British youth. This is not 'revolutionary romanticism' but a simple and irrefutable fact. This is a perspective we should look forward to and prepare for with enthusiasm. Our *task* is to "train communists" — to deepen and refine the 'gut reaction' rejection of capitalism that brought black and unemployed youth out onto the streets of some of Britain's major cities to do battle with the forces of the state. We must transform their physical rejection of reformism into an ideological rejection of reformism, not dissipate all that fervour in yet another TUC / Labour Party backed 'initiative' on unemploy-

ment. What are we frightened of? Revolution?

Youth have always been in the forefront of opposition to the system and as revolutionaries in Britain in 1983, we have a special responsibility. The young people we educate and develop now will be in the position of potential leaders of the British revolution. As long as the YCL flounders in its present reformist quagmire, that potential will remain tragically unrealised. The urgency of the task cannot be overstated — the victory of our class depends upon it.

Previous left oppositional forces within the YCL have been flawed by their inability to challenge the descent into liquidation on a political rather than an organisational level.

This time, it will be very different.

**Thomas Wright**

**The Leninist YCL Group**

## YCL in Danger?

This is the main text of the leaflet distributed by *The Leninist YCL Group* at the YCL Congress on April 9 and 10 1983.

There are vital questions that all delegates to this congress must face.

\* Does the Young Communist League "train Communists"?

\* Does its politics provide a revolutionary alternative for "all those who look to it for leadership"?

\* Is the very existence of our organisation threatened by policies which will lead to the liquidation of the league? — if so why and what can be done?

The 1980s look like being a crucial decade, with young people in the front line of major revolutionary conflicts...

### Peace

As the recession bites and profits fall in the capitalist countries imperialism is forced to intensify its anti-Soviet war drive.

Millions, especially young people, are rejecting the cold war rhetoric of Reagan and Thatcher, and are looking for a way out of the nuclear madness.

Instead of giving a clear lead against the imperialist war-mongers the YCL is just content to tail the liberal CND and the pacifist Greenham Common women. These campaigns cannot ensure lasting peace because they only tackle the symptoms of war, not its causes.

The YCL should lead a revolutionary peace campaign which recognises the connection between war and class society. It must link the struggle for peace with the revolutionary struggle to overthrow imperialism.

### Women

Equal rights for women under capitalism are a farce. Concessions won in the 60s and

70s are now proving meaningless or being taken away in the recession hit 80s. Women are being forced out of work and back into full time domestic drudgery.

The YCL has no class analysis of how capitalism oppresses women. The majority of YCL'ers project the bourgeois ideology of feminism — "Male Supremacy" is seen as the obstruction to women's liberation.

Capitalism requires women to care for, maintain and rear the labour force free of charge. In times of war and boom capitalism uses women as a reserve army of cheap, unorganised labour.

Capitalist production relations are the source of women's oppression, and women's liberation can only be secured by overthrowing the capitalist system, by socialist revolution. The YCL must reject divisive 'feminist' ideas and unite against the class enemy.

### The Police

The Black Community's hatred of the police has once again surfaced with the murder of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington police station. The increasing militarisation of the police makes a nonsense of the whole concept of "community policing". At the moment the Black Community are bearing the brunt of the attack, but this is only a prelude to a general onslaught on the whole working class as it beings to fight back.

The YCL has joined the clamour for 'police accountability', and in doing so has abandoned any Marxist understanding of the role of the state in class society.

The crisis in Britain is forcing thousands of young people into conflict with the police. The YCL must intervene and lead them into an organised fight to overthrow

the system which the police are there to defend.

### Ireland

Within the UK the people of Ireland are waging a war of National Liberation. The British state answers the national aspirations of the Irish people with ever more brutal and sophisticated methods of military repression.

The YCL's work on Ireland is a disgrace. The liberation movement is condemned and held responsible for the continued occupation of the North by British imperialism. This chauvanistic treachery must be discarded forthwith.

It is not enough to campaign against the horror of plastic bullets. We must start to build a solidarity movement in Britain to demand an end to British colonialism in Ireland and the immediate withdrawal of British troops.

The victory of the Irish people will weaken the ruling class in Britain and aid our struggle for socialist revolution.

Membership of the YCL is at an all-time low. Many branches exist only on paper, and the activity of the few remaining branches is becoming increasingly narrow. This crisis of the organisation along with the dire reformism of its policies is making the liquidation of the YCL a very real possibility. Only a return to sound Leninist theory and practice can save the YCL.

It is never too early to prepare for revolution. A vital part of that preparation is an open ideological struggle against reformism to reestablish the YCL's revolutionary credentials.

This struggle has already began within the Communist Party with the publication of *The Leninist*.

# Letters

## An open letter to Bill Dunn from John Chamberlain

To Bill Dunn,  
London District Secretary CPGB  
Copies to:

*Morning Star*

*Focus*

*Straight Left*

*Marxism Today*

*The Leninist*

*The New Worker*

Dear comrade,

Many thanks for your letter concerning my application to rejoin the Communist Party. You say that the Executive Committee (EC) "has endorsed the views" of the London District Committee that I "should not be readmitted". The reason for this being that "all the evidence" shows that I "do not agree with the policy of the Communist Party and would not work for it."

What evidence you have as to my views, you do not state, but I have never concealed the fact that I have important differences with the policy of the Party. As to your implication on that I would not fight for Party actions, you can have no evidence on this score because there is none.

I stand by the principles of democratic centralism. It is on this basis that I understand party discipline, something I would adhere to if readmitted into the Party.

Democratic centralism represents the dialectical unity of democracy and centralism.

## RCP Harmony

Dear Comrade,

I would like to congratulate you on the publication of the first three numbers of *The Leninist*. Your critique of the revisionism rampant in the CPGB is to the point, although you must admit that it is easy to score points against an ignorant imbecile such as 'comrade' Aaronovitch. Your assessment of the crisis of capitalism and its cause, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall sounds refreshingly Marxist after the reformist nonsense of the CP leadership and the equally nonsensical underconsumptionist explanations from the major Trotskyite groups. However, it is not clear how you defend the use of the term State Monopoly Capitalism, since you do not explain what you understand by it, and from the revolutionary context it becomes clear that you must mean something different from the revisionist economic theories that were adopted by the French and West German CP's, precisely to underpin their reformist attitude towards the state.

Your standpoint on Ireland seems to be the only revolutionary standpoint possible, and distinguishes you from the petty bourgeois left, such as the SWP and IMG and the like.

However, it unites you with the RCP, whom you also call petty bourgeois. I would like to attract your attention to the fact that on most important issues of the class struggle your standpoints seem to be in perfect harmony with those of the RCP: the crisis of capitalism, Ireland, the role of imperialism, the necessity of the Leninist vanguard party, women's liberation and class struggle, to name a few of the most important ones.

Even where the RCP diverges most widely

Centralism is party unity in action and distinguishes a party of a new type from a social-democratic one. But the precondition of centralism and all party actions must be democracy. This entails the right to elect and be elected to leading Party bodies. But fundamentally it is based on the right to hold and express different views. Without this democracy is a sham; party ideology stultifies; the link between the party and the working class becomes fragile.

I left the Communist Party in November 1977 and until November 1980 was a leading member of the New Communist Party (NCP). Amongst the positions I held was that of National Organiser, and editor of its paper for youth, the *Young Worker*. Because of this I had first-hand experience of the NCP's opportunism. This led me to develop differences of a fundamental nature with the majority of the leadership. Later, I came to realise that leaving the Communist Party was the biggest political mistake I had ever made.

If I were to be readmitted into the Communist Party, I would openly express and advocate my personal opinions. But this would not contradict my commitment to unity in action, for I would fight tenaciously for all party actions. This is my understanding of democratic centralism.

We all know that many militants in the Party have disagreements with the EC, this is of course

natural and healthy. But if the EC sought to stifle these comrades, to exclude them from the Party press and even refuse them membership, even though they are committed to unity in action, the EC would be acting in an utterly unprincipled and bureaucratic fashion.

It seems that because the EC disagrees with my views, they are barring me from Party membership. If this is the case it is a very dangerous position. For if the EC considers only those who agree with them to be eligible for membership then they consider the Party to be their private domain, their private property. This would lead to those in the Party who have differences being considered as having no rights. Such a state of affairs would have nothing to do with democratic centralism, on the contrary, it would be bureaucratic centralism.

I sincerely urge the EC and the London DC to reconsider their decision on my application to the Party. But whatever the outcome I would urge all my former comrades in the NCP to join the Communist Party, the party for all communists. I hope that I and others who made the mistake of joining the NCP will be welcomed back into the ranks, wiser but more determined than ever to fight for the victory of the world revolution.

Yours fraternally,  
John Chamberlain

from your position, on the attitude towards the Soviet Union, there seems to be room for genuine debate. The article in no.1 of *The Leninist* on the Polish Crisis showed your preparedness to understand a phenomenon in its historical development, and analyse its economic basis/features. You acknowledge the occurrence of mistakes in the socialist countries, the existence of a bureaucracy and the lack of socialist democracy. You quite rightly accuse the NCP of 'sickening sycophancy' towards the CPSU. It seems just a question of time till you will have to expand your analysis of the contradictory nature of Stalinism itself. Fortunately, at the same time you uphold the unconditional defence of the socialist countries against imperialism.

Finally, regarding your insistence on the necessity to work and wage the ideological struggle inside the CPGB, I can only wish you the best of luck. The most likely outcome in my opinion will be the expulsion of your tendency from the CPGB by the reformist leadership.

To finish, I enclose a cheque for a years subscription to *The Leninist*.

Yours fraternally,

Eric Johnson  
North West

intervention by the capitalist state into the economy. This happened because of barriers being created to capital accumulation by the falling rate of profit, thus we see the state intervening and nationalising entire industries. In Britain Electricity, Gas, Railways, Coal, Shipbuilding, and the greater part of the production of Steel, Cars, and Aircraft are controlled by the state. This state intervention was carried out for the interests of capital as a whole and not some 'socialist' measure as revisionists would have us believe. So we do not find any problem in the use of the term.

As to the RCP, although they may have positions parallel to us on a number of questions, the matter of the Soviet Union and the other socialist states is one of fundamental importance. They call for the destruction of the state in the Soviet Union, they play down its vital importance for the world's working class, portraying it not as the world's revolutionary centre but as an aberration that has no general lessons. They have, or are developing, a theoretical position which tries to have the best of both Tony Cliff's State Capitalist theory and Trotsky's degenerate workers state/counter-revolutionary bureaucracy stuff. This is nothing but a cop-out. We are to carry an article in the next edition of *The Leninist* which will outline our analysis of the Soviet Union, the problems of centrism, and what attitude communists should adopt.

*The Leninist* replies;

Our use of the "term State Monopoly Capitalism" is fully in line with Lenin's analysis of capitalism at the imperialist stage. In his view state monopoly capitalism was simply the result of the massive

## The Leninist

### Party Rules

Dear comrades,

I am ... of my local branch of the CPGB. Both myself and our branch secretary are, between us, fighting to maintain Marxism-Leninism as the foundation upon which our branch must be built. I was delighted by the discovery of *The Leninist* earlier this year, and presented my secretary with a copy of the second edition. He said he agreed with most of its contents, "though opposed *The Leninist* for two reasons."

1. Ireland — he maintains it is not "party policy" to support the IRA.

2. Who are you? he insists that a journal which works within the CPGB, yet is not an "official" organ of the Party, is operating against Party rules. In short, he believes that you are a group of learned 'Trots' trying to confuse and mislead naive Party members like myself.

Could you reply to these two objections, please? I would like to try to promote *The Leninist* amongst our branch membership, but would prefer to do so with the support of my secretary.

Yours fraternally  
M. Tompkins  
North West

*The Leninist* replies,  
You ask two questions,

Firstly, your comrade is correct. It is not "party policy" to support the national liberation struggle in Ireland. The question he should be asking himself is why not? Surely it is opportunism which leads the party to make the central plank of 'work' on Ireland 'the ending of all violence'. What would he say if the party adopted a similar attitude towards the struggles in South Africa or El Salvador? Would he not condemn such a position? So why is the IRA and INLA so different from the ANC (SA) or FLMN. Could it be that they are fighting British imperialism? (for a full treatment of our position on the British working class and the Irish struggle see *The Leninist* No.1)

Secondly, who are we? Are we breaking party rules? Are we learned Trots? etc.

Well if anyone thinks *The Leninist* is Trotskyite they are certainly naive.

The party leadership do not operate democratic centralism, they adhere to bureaucratic centralism, through which they stifle all genuine debate in the party, exclude revolutionaries, and take the party towards liquidationism. We stand for unity in action and open ideological struggle. This is the only principled stand to take in the party. Because of this we call upon all members of the party to sell the *Morning Star*, distribute party leaflets, fight for Communist Party candidates, and recruit new members. But before and after specific actions,

Leninists must openly advocate their views. This is the essence of democratic centralism.

*The Leninist* is fighting for the party against liquidationism, and revisionism, we oppose anti-Sovietism. We do this on the basis of our commitment to Marxism-Leninism and the liberation of mankind from the shackles of class society — this comes before any 'loyalty' to an opportunist clique.

"A revolt is a splendid thing" wrote Lenin "when it is the advanced elements who revolt against the reactionary elements. When the revolutionary wing revolts against the opportunist wing it is a good thing". (V.I. Lenin, *One Step Forward Two Steps Back*, CW, Vol.17, p.405).

Our journal provides the most advanced scientific theory, we are the advanced forces in the party. Talk of our misleading, and confusing members, is a cover for not revolting against opportunism and as such is a form of opportunism itself. We have made clear on previous occasions that increasingly, "official" party organs are nothing but the possession of particular trends; look at *Marxism Today* to see this truth. *Straight Left* likewise for all its pretence to be a product of the 'broad labour movement' is a publication of a trend in the party — the liquidationist — centrists. *The Leninist* is no different, except we are open in our ideological position.

## Fighting for the Line

Dear Comrades,

I totally agree with the line of *The Leninist*, and agree that you are the only people capable of getting our party back on the road of being a revolutionary party.

I have been trying to find some more supporters of your line in or around ... who I can get in touch with and so help each other in fighting for the line of *The Leninist* and try to get the party back to the line of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism?

I realise that security matters have to be considered here, so my request may not be possible to fulfil. If so I will carry the fight on in our party and in ... myself. But if you do have any supporters in or around ... who I can get in touch with and you can let me know of I would be very grateful.

Yours comradely,

P.M. Burton  
North West

## Labour Disgust

Comrades,

... I'd like to ask you two things.

1. As a Marxist-Leninist who has recently joined the CPGB because of general disgust with the Labour Party and the hope from reading *The Leninist* that there might be a concerted struggle for Marxism-Leninism within the party could you tell me if there is a readers group/caucus or whatever within the area I live or should I relate to people in London?

2. I have just come back from ...

... Do you want an article?

Fraternal greetings,

*The Leninist* replies,

Unfortunately we cannot pass on names, but there are a number of readers in your area, although we would not consider any of them supporters.

## Sincere Colleagues

Dear Colleague,

We would like to receive your publication on a regular basis and wondered if you would be interested in an exchange arrangement where we would put you on our complimentary list and you could put us on yours?

If you would be willing to do this perhaps you could drop me a line or give me a ring...

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Petra Lunberg

Editorial Assistant AUEW/TASS Journal

# *The Leninist*

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Founding Statement of The Leninist: The Communist Party, the Crisis and its Crisis

Frank Grafton — The Road from Thatcherism, or the Road from Marxism? (A Critique of the AES)

James Marshall — Ireland and the Opportunists

Gus Hall (General Secretary of the CP of the USA) — What's Happening in Poland?

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## **Number Two**

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James Marshall — The Polish Crisis

James Marshall — The Paradox of Afghanistan

Frank Grafton — The Economic Crisis and its Political Effects in Britain (Pt. One)

Liz Calvert — Liberation and the Class Struggle: The Real Link for Women

Reviews: Michael McGeehan — The Labour Party: A Force for Revolution or Reaction?

John Kelly — The Irish Working Class: Past and Future

Roger Freeman — Austrian Lessons

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## **Number Three**

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James Marshall — Should We Stand in Elections?

Bill Cobban — Lessons of the Falklands War

Le Communiste (with an introduction by Michael McGeehan) — From Millerandism to Mitterandism

Reviews:

Liz Calvert — Women's Freedom and Sweet Revolution

Joseph Wright — Whose Revolution in Ethiopia?

Letters

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